Lords of the Left-Hand Path



A History of Spiritual Dissent

Stephen E. Flowers, Ph.D.

LORDS OF THE LEFT-HAND PATH:
A History of Spiritual Dissent

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Second Edition

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contra stupidos

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Abbreviations

Ar.	Arabic
BCE	Before Common Era (= B.C.)
CE	Common Era (= A.D.)
DMP	Demotic Magical Papyri
G.	German
Gen.	Genesis
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
Jn.	John
Lat.	Latin
Lk.	Luke
Mk.	Mark
Mt.	Mathew
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae* (= Preisendanz' edition of the Greek magical papyri)
pl.	plural
Rus.	Russian
sg.	singular
Skt.	Sanskrit

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Preface
To the 1997 Edition
An Untimely Meditation

I began writing this book at the beginning of 1989 and for all practical purposes it was complete in late 1992. It was written during a time of great dynamism in my own life, and although the contents of the book may appear to many outward observers to be staid and even static, this dynamism is present just below the surface. This book was composed in large measure as a response to the irrational "Satanic scare" of the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was written with the intention of reaching a wide readership of thinking individuals capable of understanding the historical and cultural scope of ideas underlying the images of the left-hand path.

The manuscript proved to be an untimely one in this regard. I attempted to interest literary agents and publishers of all kinds in the manuscript— it was universally rejected. Large publishers were evidently only interested in books which sent one of two messages: either "devil worshippers are dangerous and lurking in your schools and day-care centers and you should be very afraid," or "there are no such things as Satanists and those who call themselves that are bafoons." Of course, this book provided neither of these approved cultural messages. *Lords of the Left-Hand Path* is a sober, objectively sympathetic and scholarly look at individuals and schools of thought which have been referred to as being *left-hand path*. This serious approach was thought to be "too disturbing" — as one agent put it to me — to be published for a broad readership.

Smaller publishers too found reasons to reject the manuscript. In this instance it was usually because the interpretations of their own sacred cows were seen as too controversial, or that certain individuals or schools of thought simply could not ever be mentioned in a book published by that company— such are the forces at work in the media today.

This is a forbidden book.

The contents of this book come through my own lens of understanding. The lens is my own and I take full responsibility and credit for both its shortcomings and any glory attached to it. However, it must also be ssid that, because of my particular hermeneutic, each of the individuals and schools observed in this text also contributed to the shaping and refinement of that lens. Beyond these there are other such shapers— chief among them my experience in academia. The intellectual techniques learned in that environment, perhaps more than any other are responsible for the form and nature of this text.

The original draft of chapter 9 of this book contained more extensive quotes from Anton LaVey. Permissions were denied for the use of these quotes, so this chapter was rewritten avoiding any extensive or contiguous quotations of the works by LaVey. The resulting text is perhaps less positive toward the Church of Satan than it might have been if LaVey had allowed himself to speak directly. However, the analysis in the chapter is now actually immensely more accurate.

It should also be noted that the author of this book is in not a Satanist, but is a practitioner of the left-hand path based on purely indigenous European models.

This is the first and last book I shall write on the subject of the left-hand path. What I have to say about the major schools discussed here has been said in this text. I have now returned to my own garden, there to tend the saplings of seeds long planted.

Stephen E. Flowers
Woodharrow
Friday June 13, 1997

Preface
To the 1992 Edition

Is there a sinister conspiracy of Satanic forces loose in the world causing mayhem, abducting, abusing, and even sacrificing children and others to His Satanic Majesty? The media have asked these and other equally sensational questions have been asked in the recent past, and offered the most dramatic and entertaining answers possible for the consumption of a bored and dull public.

If the question arises as to whether there is a coherent Satanic or left-hand path philosophy or theology, the answer has to be that there is, and that there has been for centuries. However, the philosophers of this path of the left-hand have rarely been directly heard from until this century. The present age offers us the unique opportunity to hear directly from the Lords of the Left-Hand Path in a way unknown since the days of ancient philosophers.

We live in an age which enables us to become better informed of a wide variety of viewpoints and approaches to the spiritual problems of being human beings, it at the same time is an age which enconrages a monotonous sameness in the answers to fundamental questions acceptable in a mass culture. The philosophers of the left-hand have always challenged the all-pervasive common ways of doing things — whatever those ways might have been — and thus have always been agents for change. The left-hand path, as expressed in the world today, is an open challenge to certain individuals who are ready to take it up. It is also now for the first time in ages being expressed openly in the hope that by knowing what its true character is, those who choose not to follow it will at least be informed as to what it is all about, and in this knowledge lose at least some of their age-old fear of it.

The point of view championed in this book is decidedly that of the left-hand path itself. I have years of training as a scholar, and have put these and other skills I have acquired to use in shaping a sympathetic, yet objective analysis of the major historical and contemporary manifestations of this fascinating ultimate adventure of the human spirit in the cosmos. This will be a refreshing departure. There have been dozens of recent books, and hundreds of books throughout history, which have purported to study the Devil and all his works from a decidedly antagonistic viewpoint. There have also been a very few studies for public consumption written by modern philosophical Satanists from a highly polemic angle. I trust that the objective reader will be no more put off by my viewpoint than he or she would be if a Catholic priest would write a book on the history of Christian theology.

There is a clear and present need for this work as there has never been a work of its kind, and this vacuum is becoming dangerous to the philosophical fabric of the post-modern world. Again the cries of "Burn the witch!," "Kill the heretic!," and "Death to the Satanist!" are being heard. This time not so much from priests and evangelists — who have already largely been discredited in this day and age — but by therapists and law enforcement officers, bolstered by the medieval world-views of extremist theologians. In the past it was impossible for the lords of the left-hand path to speak out; now the time has come when it is necessary that they must do so. This book indirectly gives a voice to all those who have tread the leftward road throughout history and who continue to explore it in the present world. If it brings just one ray of enlightenment on these matters, it will have done its work.

Dr. Stephen E. Flowers
Austin, Texas
Friday, January 13, 1989

Chapter 1
The Left-Hand Path

Introduction

We will begin with definitions. Philosophical inquiry calls for clarity, and we need clarity for this publicly unexplored realm. Without these precise definitions anyone exploring this path on any level will be led into the sea of misunderstandings and confusion (evident in the section below on the historical portrayals of the left-hand path and "black magic"). Exact understanding of the nature of the left-hand path hinges on a precise theory of the universe in which it is perceived. This theory and the model it presents will prove useful in analyzing the left-hand path traditions throughout history.(1)

The universe is the totality of existence both known and unknown. This is a complex model, divided into at least two components: 1) the objective universe and 2) the subjective universe. The objective universe is the natural cosmos— or world order. This is essentially mechanical or organic, i.e. it is ruled by certain predictable laws manifested in a time/space continuum. The objective universe, including the laws governing it, can be equated with "nature" as well as with "God" in the Judeo-Christian tradition. All of natural science as well as orthodox theology is predicated on the concept that these laws of the objective universe can be discovered and quantified or described in a purely rational manner in the first instance or by "divine revelation" in the other. When considered closely it is evident that what is usually referred to as "God" in orthodox religions is actually identical to that which he is said to create— the natural/mechanical/organic order— or *cosmos*. It might also be pointed out that there has generally been a popular but sometimes misleading distinction between the concepts "mechanical" and "organic." On one level they are the same in that both are governed by predictable laws. A clock-work or the human body are both ruled and maintained by certain mechanical structures which allow them to function in their environments. At another level there is a distinction between the mechanical and the organic in that the organic model has the ability to propagate and mutate its mechanical structures to ensure its survival. This is possible because there are coded mechanisms within the organism expressly for this purpose (DNA) and because the malleable molecular structure of the mechanism allows for these mutations.

The *subjective universe* is the "world" of any sentient entity within the universe. There are as many subjective universes as there are sentient beings. The subjective universe is the particularized manifestation of consciousness within the universe. Usually experience of the *objective universe* is only indirect as information concerning it must come through the subjective universe. Curiously enough the subjective universe does not seem governed by the same natural/mechanical/organic laws as the objective universe— in fact this is the main distinction between them. The subjective universe has the option of acting in a *non-natural* way, i.e. free from the limitations of the world of five senses and three dimensions.

At this point it might be worth pointing out that the terms objective/subjective have nothing in common with the distinction between accurate/inaccurate, or exact/inexact which

popular usage might have projected onto the terms. The subjective universe is capable of far more accurate and exact manifold operations than the objective universe— your reading and understanding of these words is based on the exercise of a faculty within your subjective universe. In simple grammatical terms the subject is the reader, i.e. that which reads, and the object is that which is read. The subjective universe is capable of a full spectrum of possibilities which range from virtually absolute precisions to almost total delusion because it is not bound by natural laws. The focus or epicenter of this non-natural subjective universe is equated with human consciousness, or soul, or self.

The *non-natural* aspect of this soul is clearly and basically indicated by humanity's drive to impose structures artificially created in that subjective universe upon the objective universe. All artificially created structures (i.e. those made by art/craft) are by definition something separate and apart from the natural cosmos— be those structures pyramids, poems, or political institutions. Animals, many of which may have complex social organizations, are bound by nature and by their organic programming. The wolf-pack, no matter if in one part of the world or another, now or a million years ago, has the same social order. But you will look in vain to find *any two* human social institutions that are absolutely identical. Anything which is the product of the subjective universe — individual or collective — will bear the mark of variation.

Each particular instance of this soul — this phenomenon of the subjective universe — implies the existence of a first form or general principle from which all the particular manifestations are derived. In the most philosophically refined of the schools of the left-hand path this first *principle of isolate intelligence* is identified as the "Prince of Darkness," or the ultimate deity of the left-hand path. This is the archetype of the Self from which all particular selves are derived. This is also an element of the non-natural universe which objectively belongs to the universe itself. In this way the Prince of Darkness can be seen as an independent sentient being in the objective universe because this is the very *principle* of that quality in the universe. Humanity is the only species we know of which shares that quality.

The Right-Hand Path and the Left-Hand Path

The central question now becomes what is the way in which this conscious, free soul is going to relate to, or seek to interact with, the objective universe or the universe as a whole. The right-hand path answers this question simply by saying that the subjective universe must harmonize itself with the laws of the objective universe— be that envisioned as God or nature. Humanity is to seek knowledge of the law, and then apply itself to submitting to that law in order to gain ultimate union with the objective universe, with God, or nature. The right-hand path is the path of union with universal reality (God or Nature). When this union is completed the individual self will be annihilated, the individual will become one with the divine or natural cosmic order. In this state the ego is destroyed as "heaven" is entered or a nirvanic existence/non-existence is "attained." This is clearly the goal of all orthodox Judaic/Christian/Islamic or Buddhistic sects.

The left-hand path considers the position of humanity as it is; it takes into account the manifest and deep-seated desire of each human being to be a free, empowered, independent actor within his or her world. The pleasure and pain made possible by independent existence are seen as something to be embraced and as the most reasonable signs of the highest, most noble destiny possible for humans to attain— a kind of independent existence on a level usually thought of as *divine*.

Just as most humans go through their natural, everyday lives seeking that which will give them maximal amounts of such things as knowledge, power, freedom, independence and distinction within their world, those who walk the left-hand path logically extend this to the non-natural realm. They eschew right-hand path admonitions that such "spiritual behavior" is "*evil*" and that they should basically "get with the program" (of God, of Nature, etc.) and become good "company men." The self awareness of independence is seen by many as the fundamental reality of the human condition— one can accept it and

live, or reject it and *die*. By accepting the internal, known reality of human consciousness an eternally dynamic — ever moving, ever changing — existence is embraced; by rejecting it and embracing an external, unknown reality of God/Nature, an eternally static— ever still and permanent — existence is accepted. From a certain enlightened perspective, both paths are perfectly good, it is just a matter of the conscious exercise of the will to follow one of these paths in an aware state without self-delusion.

Essentially, the left-hand path is then the path of non-union with the objective universe. It is the way of isolating consciousness within the subjective universe and, in a state of self-imposed psychic solitude, refining the soul or psyche to ever more perfect levels. The objective universe is then made to harmonize itself with the will of the individual psyche instead of the other way around. Where the right-hand path is **theo**centric (or certainly alleocentric— "other-centered"), the left-hand path is psychecentric, or soul/self-centered. Those within the left-hand path may argue over the nature of this self/ego/soul, but that the individual is the epicenter of the path itself seems undisputed. An eternal separation of the individual intelligence from the objective universe is sought in the left-hand path. This amounts to an immortality of the independent self consciousness moving within the objective universe and interacting with it at will.

White Magic/Black Magic

The terms "white magic" and "black magic" have been so bandied about in popular jargon that they might be said to have lost most of their meaningfulness. For my purposes I will restore them to a meaningful philosophical context. Magic can be defined as a methodology by which the configuration of the subjective or objective universe is altered through an act of will originating within the psyche, or the core of the individual subjective universe. Perhaps the most famous definition was offered by the English magician, Aleister Crowley who said: "Magic(k) is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will."(2)

Actually there is no one definition of magic universally accepted by academics and practicing magicians alike, nor is there common agreement on the distinctions between *religion* and *magic*. But taking most of the current theories into account a more comprehensive definition might be ventured: Magic is the willed application of symbolic methods to cause or prevent changes in the universe by means of symbolic acts of communication with paranormal factors. These factors could be inside or outside the subjective universe of the operator. Magic is a way to make things happen that ordinarily would not happen. Religion may be distinguished from magic only when the nature of the human will is taken into account. In magic the individual will is primary and is considered to have a real and independent existence. The magician makes the universe do his bidding, to harmonize itself with his will, whereas in religion the human community attempts to harmonize its behavior with a universal pattern, be it God or Nature.

In a precise sense the distinction between White and Black Magic is simply that White Magic is a psychological methodology for the promotion of *union* with the universe and pursuing aims in harmony with those of the universe, while Black Magic is such a methodology for the exercise of independence from the universe and pursuing self-oriented aims. Structurally, White Magic has much in common with religion as defined above, while Black Magic is more purely magical in and of itself. This is why magic as a category of behavior is often condemned by orthodox religious systems.

The historical conceptualizations of White Magic and Black Magic will be discussed below, but for the sake of precise understanding here, I will simply be using White Magic as a designation for the spiritual methodology or technology of the right-hand path and Black Magic as a designation for that of the left-hand path.

Lords of the Left-Hand Path

In this book I examine the ideas and careers of many magicians and philosophers of the past and present. Some are figures widely thought to be "Satanic" or evil, while others may have gone through history without such an image. But images rarely correspond to

reality— despite what Madison Avenue or Washington DC would have you believe. In the final analysis some of these figures will be rejected as being something other than practitioners of the left-hand path. The criteria I use in determining the true left-hand path character of those so deemed must be laid out clearly at this point. Some of those considered in the book will have a number of the criteria, but not enough to be considered a "lord" or master of the path.

There are two major criteria for being considered a true Lord of the Left-Hand Path— Deification of the Self and Antinomianism. The first of these is complex: The system of thought proposed by the magician or philosopher must be one that promotes individual self-deification, preferably based on an initiatorily magical scheme. This first criterion will be seen to have four distinct elements:

1) Self-deification— attainment of an enlightened (or awakened), independently existing intellect and its relative immortality.
2) Individualism— the enlightened intellect is that of a given individual, not a collective body
3) Initiation— the enlightenment and strength of essence necessary for the desired state of evolution of self are attained by means of stages created by the will of the magician, not because he or she was "divine" to begin with.
4) Magic— practitioners of the left-hand path see themselves as using their own wills in a rationally intuited system or spiritual technology designed to cause the universe around them to conform to their self-willed patterns.

The second criterion, antinomianism, states that practitioners think of themselves as "going against the grain" of their culturally conditioned and conventional norms of "good" and "evil." True Lords of the Left-Hand Path will have the spiritual courage to identify himself with the cultural norms of "evil." There will be an embracing of the symbols of conventional "evil," or "impurity," or "rationality," or whatever quality the conventional culture fears and loathes. The lord of the left-hand path will set himself apart from his fellow man, will actually or figuratively become an outsider, in order to gain the kind of inner independence necessary for the other initiatory work present in the first criterion. The practice of this second criterion often manifests itself in "antinomianism," that is, the purposeful reversal of conventional normatives: "evil" becomes "good," "impure" becomes "pure," "darkness" becomes "light."

Literally antinomianism implies something "against the law." But the practitioner of the left-hand path is not a criminal in the usual sense. He or she is bound to break the cosmic laws of nature and to break the conventional social laws imposed by ignorance and intolerance. But in so doing the left-hand path practitioner seeks a "higher law" of reality founded on knowledge and power. Although beyond good and evil, this path requires the most rigorous of ethical standards. These standards are based on understanding and not on blind obedience to external authorities.

This latter characteristic of the true left-hand path is the chief cause of its misunderstanding, not only for those on the outside, but for some who would follow this path as well. It takes an enormous amount of spiritual courage to persevere in the face of rejection by not only the world around them but by elements within their own subjective universes as well. Many break under the strain and fall away from the aim and sink back into the morass of cultural norms.

To be considered a true lord of the left-hand path then, someone must have rejected the forms of conventional "good" and embraced those of conventional "evil," and have practiced antinomianism, as part of the effort to gain a *permanent, independent, enlightened* and *empowered* level of being. This self-deification does not seem sufficient without the "Satanic" component which acts as a guide through the quagmire of popular sentiment and conventional beliefs.

In completing research for this book I discovered that in fact there are two distinct *branches* of the left-hand path. *Both* of these branches fulfill the criteria outlined above. but approach the process from distinct points of view. One of these, which I will call the "Immanent Branch of the Left-hand Path," proceeds from an "objectivistic" and even *materialistic* outlook. Its magical methods are often steeped in *imagery* and its orientation is almost exclusively toward the objective or mundane universe. In this branch the antinomian aspect is especially pronounced. Among modern schools it is exemplified by LaVeyan Satanism. (See chapter 9.)

The second branch, which I will name the "Transcendental Branch of the Left-Hand Path," is based upon a psychecentric (soul- or intellect-centered) model. It is highly idealistic and its magical methods are usually founded on *eternal forms* or *archetypes*. The ultimate separation of the human mind from the cosmic order around it is recognized and celebrated. In its highest forms the Transcendent Branch is focused on the subjective universe— on the separation of the Self from the cosmic order and the evolution of that Self into a permanent and empowered form. In this branch the self-divinizing aspect is especially pronounced. Among modern schools it is exemplified by the Setian magical philosophy of Michael Aqnino. (See chapter 10.)

I will begin with the left-hand path as understood in "eastern" religious systems— that is systems which have their origins in the Indo-Iranian cultural sphere. I will discuss the concepts of the right-hand path *versus* the left-hand path in the context of Hinduism and Buddhism (in which the terms first originated), this section will place the whole discussion in a non-Judeo-Christian context, and in one in which the two paths co-exist within the same cosmology. Also included here is a treatment of the Zoroastrian doctrines of dualism and how they affected the development of the left-hand path in the west.

The philosophical systems of certain great world cultures, such as those of the Far East (China and Japan), or the Meso-American world, will be noted for their absence. This is partially due to limitations in my own knowledge, but it also seems that the systems of Taoism and Shinto, for example, lack the strict dichotomies necessary to understanding the role of the individual in the universe in terms of the "two paths." The degree to which they are present in either system seems to have been the result of contact with Indo-Aryan thought in the form of Buddhism.

In the second part of the book, I will discuss the western branches of the left-hand path. First we must understand clearly the true nature of the "western" traditions. It is important to know the degree to which indigenous European systems share elements with the "eastern" traditions, and the degree to which the "west" is really a product of southern influence— chiefly coming from the Middle East and Egypt. What we often call "eastern" is in fact more truly western (or northern), while what we call "western" is really more truly "middle eastern" or southern.

In the discussion of the original European traditions we will first explore the Greco-Roman world. The Promethean myth is seen as a paradigm of the relationship of the "creator god" and the "giver of the gift of the divine spark." In the north we will see the Odinic myth as an original paradigm of the Prince of Darkness which foreshadows the Faustian themes to come.

The west, of course, became greatly influenced by Middle Eastern traditions through the conversion to Christianity (a Judaic cult from the east), as well as Judaism itself and late Islam. Understanding of this tradition is essential to understanding the left-hand path in the west today. Interesting here are Sumerian as well as Semitic backgrounds on the role of "gods of evil" in non-Judaic Semitic religion.

The Egyptian tradition, especially as it regard the cult of the god Set, is important not only for the understanding of ancient left-hand path traditions, but also for its possible significance for the contemporary Temple of Set.

To grasp the deepest significance of the left-hand path in the west from the time of the conversions to the dawn of the post modern age (after World War II) Christian period. We

must discover the Judaic roots of Christianity in Christian ideas of "evil" and of the nature of Satan. In this regard we can not ignore the importance of the Gnostic (especially Ophite and Naassene: "serpentine") interpretations on the role of the Serpent/Lucifer and his Promethean relationship with humankind.

This can be starkly contrasted with the orthodox Christian doctrine concerning the same Edenic myth. It will be apparent that a close, rational and objective reading of the "Myth of Eden" shows that the Serpent is indeed the "savior" of humanity, and its "creator" in a spiritual sense.

We will also see the remarkable history of the left-hand path within the Islamic tradition where we will meet some of the most self-aware followers of this path before this century.

Many people, modern practicing Satanists among them, somehow believe that the Middle Ages were a great time for Satanic activity. Nothing could be further from the truth. The medieval period was almost devoid of true left-hand path activity— although the Church often liked to believe, and encourage others to believe, that Satanic cults were lurking under every rock. This ended in the "witch craze" of the 16th and 17th centuries as a predictable manifestation of right-hand path ignorance and fear run amok.

One interesting outgrowth of the medieval tradition in Germany was the Faustian myth which leads us into the modern age and beyond. This will depend greatly on the transition from the ideas surrounding the Faustian magicians of the late Middle Ages to those surrounding Goethe's *Faust*— the transition from the medieval mind-set (seeking of knowledge and power is inherently "evil") to a modern mind-set (seeking of knowledge and power is good). Here we really have a return to ancient precepts. Images of the Devil in Classical and Romantic ideologies are certainly important to this transition in western culture.

The 19th century "Satanists" of France cannot be ignored, even though they offer up a disappointing picture when viewed from a left-hand path perspective. Most of them have little or no understanding of the positive traits of the left-hand path— but merely wallow in the darkness as an exercise in obscure aesthetics.

For the understanding of the rise of philosophical Satanism in the latter half of the 20th century no period of history is more important than the occult revival of the late 19th and early 20th century. The original Luciferian/Ophite-Gnostic doctrines of the Theosophy of H. P. Blavatsky (especially as expressed in *The Secret Doctrine*) form one branch of this tradition, while the Thelemism of Aleister Crowley forms another. Crowley must be viewed here from a totally philosophical perspective. He is doubtless one of the most important theorists concerning the left-hand path in the modern western world— yet he holds an extremely ambiguous relationship to it. In connection to Thelemism we must also discuss the German school of Saturnians, originally led by Gregor A. Gregorius (Eugen Grosche). The final part of the book will deal in detail with the two most important contemporary versions of left-hand path philosophy, Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, and the Temple of Set.

Throughout this book I will try to cut through the confusion, misinformation — and even disinformation — about the left-hand path and practice of actual Black Magic based on the exact principles outlined in this chapter. This is not to say that I am not aware that throughout history certain of these terms have been used by followers of the right-hand path, or by those who have simply been misled by such sources for many years, in ways very different from the way I am using them. The distinction must simply be made that I am writing about the left-hand path from an internal perspective, while most other sources are written from an external one. Reading what someone from the right-hand path has to say about the left-hand path is rather like reading a book on Wall Street written by an economics professor schooled at the University of Moscow. He may have interesting insights but without the perspective of a Wall Street broker you will probably not get much closer to really understanding how the stock market works.

Historically the left-hand path has sometimes been identified by the *methods* it is said to use, such as necromancy (raising the dead for divinatory purposes) and sexual magic (it seems the right-hand path has always had a problem with sexuality). In point of fact there are no categorical methodological proscriptions on the left-hand path within its various traditions east or west. Methods are usually chosen for purely pragmatic reasons. If it works it will usually be implemented. There is often a strong antinomian element in the magical methodology of the left-hand path. Going *against the grain* of social conventions or natural boundaries is often seen as a mode of consciously exercising the divine faculty inherent in humanity. This factor must be seen in the broadest perspective, however, as some behaviors which may *seem* to be antinomian or against social conventions or propriety, e.g. ingesting massive doses of intoxicants, are actually roundly condemned by the most sophisticated practitioners of the left-hand path in the west. The philosophical basis for this is that such intoxicants impair the exercise of the individual will and self— the supreme faculty viewed from the perspective of the left-hand path. Drugs would, from this point of view, be more effective at attaining the self-annihilation sought within the right-hand path.

Another way in which black magic has sometimes historically been differentiated from white magic is the classification of entities with which, or with whom, the magician is said to deal. White magicians would invoke only "angelic" beings, while black magicians would call on "demonic" entities. This is, of course, predicated on medieval Christian angelologies and demonologies, and one quite often finds in the old grimoires that demonic forces are coerced by the power of the names of God to do the bidding of the magician— which could be virtually anything. Angels could be used to seduce or kill, demons to gain wisdom and discover truth. From the point of view of the left-hand path itself this distinction would be seen as hypocritical. Again the focus would not be on the "hows" but rather on the purpose, the "whys."

In this regard the black/white distinction is sometimes historically made between maleficent and beneficent magic. Magic designed to do harm is black, that which is supposed to heal or do good is white. This distinction at least has some valid aspects. The only problems from the left-hand path viewpoint are that 1) it does not address any of the essential cosmological or theological questions regarding the two paths, and 2) it is generally unrealistic. "White magicians," when push comes to shove, usually have no problem in asking (or coercing) God or angels into giving them victory over their enemies and vanquishing their "diabolical foes" (i.e., anyone who dares cross them). The left-hand path views magic as a technique or methodology of human action which in and of itself is devoid of moral value— magic doesn't kill people, magicians kill people. The use of Black Magic would be viewed as being governed by the same ethical standards as all other categories of human behavior. The Black Magician refuses to be limited in his use of magic just because this activity belongs to a class of behavior usually condemned by orthodox religion. If a goal is worth attaining by *any means* it is perfectly acceptable to use magic if necessary to attain it. If a war is worth waging, or if a man has good reason to defend himself from attack, the Black Magician will have no problem with using magic to destroy his enemy. He also sees nothing but hypocrisy in the White Magician who prays, or who uses physical means for the same ends while condemning the Black Magician as evil. The use of Black Magic is simply a logical extension of human motives into the realm of magic.

Finally, there is the fundamental distinction between the two paths: that of union *versus* non-union, which has already been discussed. It is from this basic principle that even the other misguided distinctions can be understood best. From a position of magical independence the Black Magician would be able to employ pragmatically any magical technology he willed, deal with any kind of entity (or most probably dispense with interaction with exterior entities altogether), and seek any end he desired— in each case being guided by an *internal* sense of purpose and responsibility. Ultimate spiritual independence is the essential quality of the left-hand path. With the freedom this quality

provides comes the possibility for unethical behavior— this is, after all, the price of freedom.

The existence of the left-hand path is not easily discovered, but once its principles have been uncovered it slowly becomes apparent just how widespread the philosophy is. In this work I am concentrating on schools and individuals who either are self-avowedly followers of the left-hand path (e.g., *vamamarga*, Church of Satan, Temple of Set), or who have knowledge of it and perhaps though they try to differentiate themselves from it (at least publicly) seem to have actually been practitioners of the left-hand path when viewed from the perspective of the path itself (e.g., H. P. Blavatsky or Aleister Crowley). However, the basic precepts of the left-hand path have for centuries penetrated far beyond the sphere of magical and occult activity. Many ancient philosophies were based on principles held in common with the left-hand path and it was only with the advent of Christianity that those philosophies were either first suppressed as evil, or "Christianized" so as to be made palatable, e.g. the cult of Odin or Pythagorean/Platonic philosophy. More recently, modern philosophies and political ideologies have fully embraced principles basic and fundamental to the left-hand path, almost all of which have become the accepted norm in the west. It is quite understandable why the forces of orthodox Christianity fought every advance in scientific, political, or religious philosophy, for each advance in spiritual freedom and enforcement of the interests of plurality over unity is indeed a victory for the Prince of Darkness — the principle of isolate intelligence — over the monolithic, singular force of the rule of God.

Notes for Chapter 1

(1) A chief source for this discussion is Michael A. Aquino's "Black Magic in Theory and Practice" (San Francisco: Temple of Set, 1987) [= *Crystal Tablet of Set*, pp. 1-61.]

(2) Aleister Crowley. *Magick* (New York: Weiser, 1974), p. 131.

The Left-Hand Path in the East

Chapter 2
The Eastern Tradition

I contemplate in my heart the nonfearful divinity of shining darkness.
(*Shivatoshini* 1.1.14.)

— The Left-Hand Path in the East —

For the western reader the examination of the left-hand path, within the context of orthodox right-hand path cults of the east, will quickly demonstrate in a uniquely objective fashion the true structural meanings of what the left-hand path is really all about. It has the added advantage of showing this within cultures that have been *relatively* tolerant of the aims and motives of the left-hand path. By exploring the left-hand path from the perspective of eastern traditions *first* we can solve a few problems for ourselves later. The approach to the east will disentangle many of the arguments from the sometimes hopelessly confused jumble we find in the historical sources of the left-hand path in the west. It will eventually become apparent that the division into "eastern" and "western" branches has been done simply to present certain ideas in a clear and organized fashion. The left-hand path is an ever recurring answer to humanity's questions beyond the restrictions of time and place.

Here I will consider as "eastern" the traditions which haves their distinctive origins in the Indo-Iranian cultural sphere of southern Asia, that is: Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism.

The east/west division dissolves with an understanding of the common traditional roots of both— in the substrata of Indo-European philosophies. Furthermore, the entirely cross-cultural nature of the left-hand path will become more obvious. The principles upon which the right-hand path / left-hand path distinction are based are found throughout the history of humankind and over a broad cultural spectrum. The true lords of the left-hand path have dwelled in the world at all times and in all places and can not be limited to any time or geographical area.

The ultimate roots of the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) religious and philosophical traditions are not to be found on the Indian subcontinent itself, but rather in the Caucus region and on the planes of present day southern Russia. It was most probably in this region that a multi-phased migration of local populations began during the fourth millennium BCE.(1) This population is known by the cumbersome and unromantic name "Indo-European." This is because the final migratory destinations of this originally unified group was to stretch from western Europe all the way to India and to the border of China.

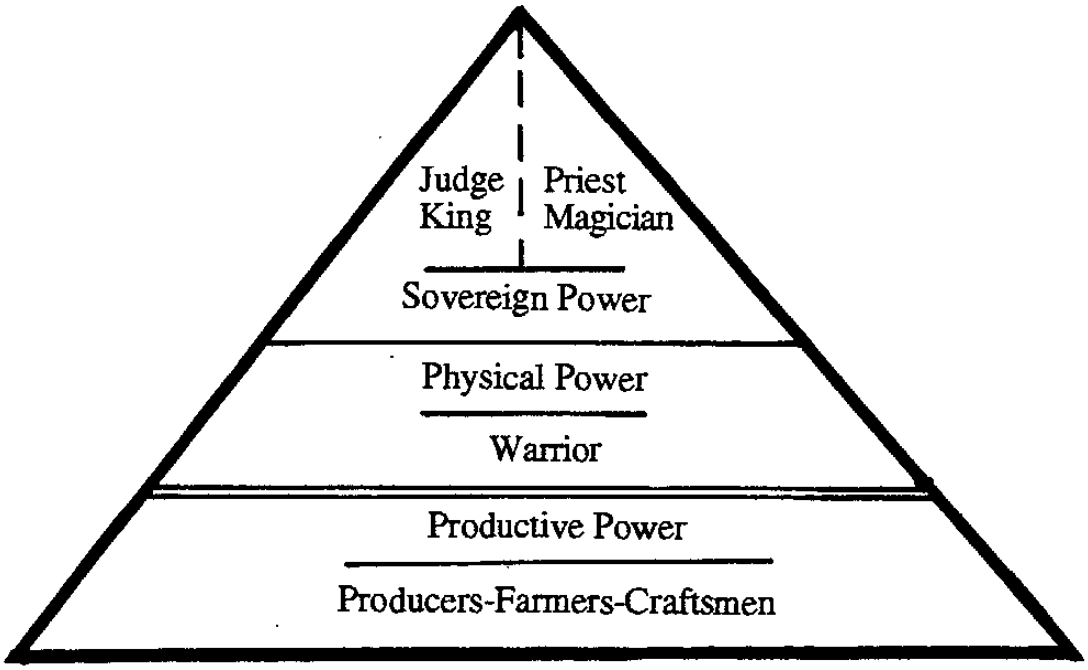
The original Indo-Europeans were a semi-nomadic people who had first domesticated the horse on the open steppes, invented the wheel (essential to their war-chariots and wagons), and who had first learned to smelt metals as hard as copper. With this combination of horse, wheel and copper, they were virtually invincible in battle— and so spread themselves out over vast expanses of territory. They slowly conquered and subdued the local populations, largely imposing their culture, language and religious system on the

region by means of a combination of their military strength and their cultural prestige. So, roughly at the same time the cities of Mesopotamia were beginning to thrive, and the pyramids were being built in Egypt, there was in fact another "high culture" that descended from the north and spread itself throughout most of the known world. But whereas the Mesopotamians and Egyptians built in stone, the Indo-Europeans built *intellectual* monuments. The most striking of these is perhaps the *Rig Veda*, which has been orally transmitted from the time of its codification beginning at the end of the second millennium BCE *to the present day*. This invisible intellectual edifice has proved many times more durable than all the stones of other cultures— for it has remained *alive*, dynamic and meaningful throughout this time.

Ancient Indo-European philosophy and religion was not based on a unified cult, but rather on a stratified structure of several levels. These levels, or *functions*, have been most elaborately commented on by the French Indo-Europeanist Georges Dumézil and his followers.(2) The first order belongs to the realm of the *intellect*— both rational and intuitive. In the most archaic Indian system these were ruled by the gods Mitra and Varuna respectively, in the Germanic realm these same functions are filled by Tyr and Odin. The second order belongs to the realm of physical force— ruled over by the god Indra in the *Vedas*, the god Thor in the Norse *Eddas*. The third order is that of natural procreation or vitality, which is governed by the Ashvinau in India and by the Vanic deities Frey and Freya — the Lord and the Lady — in Germania. These mythic orderings are reflected in the society as well which is organized in an intelligentsia class — kings, philosophers, judges and magicians — a warrior class, and a provider class of farmers, craftsmen, entertainers, etc. This very ancient division is also reflected in Plato's *idealized* society discussed in *The Republic* (ca 350 BCE),(3) where he outlines a state of tradesmen or craftsmen, auxiliaries or warriors, and guardians or philosophers all with their specialized functions in the organized society.

What is essential to realize here is that the religions or philosophical attitudes of those of the first order are radically different from those of the second or third. Those of the first function focused their attention on the intellect, on the soul or psyche of man. This was the center of their attention from the beginning. Even in the earliest texts of the *Rig Veda* the statement is made by the priests that "We created the gods," meaning that the gods and goddesses were really projections of the true divine paradigms concentrated in the intellectual or psychic faculty of human beings. The second function concerns physical force and its use— especially in the capacity of the warrior. The third function is centered in nature and in the cycles of nature and organic life— the powers of production and reproduction. This external reality is the focus of their religions and philosophical conceptions. Thus we can see that even at this most archaic stage there was a certain dichotomy between those who "worshipped" the self or intellect and those who worshipped "nature." But from the beginning in the Indo-European framework there was room and a place for both ends of the spectrum within a productive system. In this context it was not so much a matter of lateral division, right-hand path /left-hand path, but rather a vertical one, reflected in the "social structure" of divinities and humanity.

As mentioned above there was also an original division within the first function, between Mitra and Varuna or Tyr and Odin. Mitra or Tyr represent the rational, ordered mind— the rationality of cosmic order. Varuna or Odin represent the mantic, dynamic mind— the freedom of chaotic flux. This same configuration will later be recognized by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche as the Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies in humanity.(4) Both must work in an integrated fashion, much as the left and right hemispheres of the brain must work. But here too there may be a primal seed in the structures of the psyche which will at times be expressed in terms of the right-hand and left-hand paths.



Because the ancient Indo-European peoples would migrate, conquering and subduing indigenous populations with forces largely made up of those of the first and second stratum, the third stratum was often subject to broad influences from the religious and philosophical concepts and practices of the indigenous populations. However, it would be a radical error to assume that the original system did not already contain structures capable of assimilating the input from the native religions. This is why, for example, although historians of Indian tantrism will point out that much of tantric practice originates in the lower castes, and is anti-Brahmanical, there is already precedent for it in the oldest evidence of the *Rig Veda* itself.(5) The non-Aryan element did not create the system, but it radically affected its form as practiced in later Hindu times.

It has also been noted that the later "Vedic Way" of Hinduism is not an embodiment of the actual attitudes present in the Vedas themselves, and that paradoxically the tantric systems exemplify the spiritual attitudes of the Vedas much more vibrantly than the modern "Vedic Way."(6)

Right-Hand Path / Left-Hand Path

The actual origin of the right-hand *versus* left-hand path terminology itself is rooted in the vocabulary of Indian tantric sects. The two main divisions of these are the *dakshinachara*, "right-way" and the *vamachara*, "left-way." The variations in these sects will be discussed in the section on Hinduism below. The eventual elaboration of the right-hand/left-hand path distinction is qnite complex, but its origins are most probably rooted in the widespread tantric doctrines of a natural flow of universal force through the human body along a left to right line— entering the left, exiting to the right. This is mirrored by a cosmic flow of force from the north to the south. When the human being is *oriented* toward the east this flow pattern is said to be in harmony with the one natural to his body, as his left hand is to the north, his right hand to the south.(7) Here are the roots of the key to the common antinomianism, reversal of normal patterns, found in left-hand path tantrism. To reverse the left to right pattern, contrary to nature and cosmic law, requires an exercise of the faculty of will. This is an act of rebellion against nature and against divinely ordained cosmic order. In almost technical terms the *dakshinachara* is going with the natural flow and the *vamachara* is going against the natural flow. In going against this flow, individuals more fully articulate — individuate — themselves within their environments. Independence and freedom are attained and maintained— perhaps even personal immortality is to be gained.

It has been noted that the essence of what came to be called the *vamachara* is actually the true *tantric* one and that the term and practices of the *dakshinachara* were only introduced later as a reform movement within tantrism.(8) Julius Evola remarks on distinction between the two paths:

> The creative and productive aspect of the cosmic process is signified by the right hand, by the color white, and by the two goddesses Uma and Gauri (in whom Shakti appears as Prakashatmika, "she who is light and manifestation"). The second aspect, that of conversion and return (*exitus, reditus*), is signified by the left hand, by the color black, and by the dark, destructive goddesses Durga and Kali. Thus according to the *Mahakala-Tantra*, when the left and right hands are in equilibrium we experience samsara, but when the left hand prevails, we find liberation.(9)

Another fascinating delineation of the distinction between the two paths of spiritual development in the Hindu context is that found between the two pathways the soul may take upon death: the *devayana* (way of the *devas* [gods]) and the *pitriyana* (way of the *pitris* [ancestors]). The *devayana* is the polar path, marked by the summer half of the year, when the sun is moving toward the north pole. Those who take the *devayana* upon death are enlightened and become like gods, and will only reincarnate according to their wills. Those who take the *pitriyana*, which is the equatorial path, marked by the sun's motion toward the equator in the winter half of the year, will reincarnate according to a natural order and will thus eternally re-incarnate their ancestors.(10)

Alain Danielou remarks that the left-hand path corresponds to a "disintegrating-tendency" (*tamas*) which "uses the power of Nature, the passions and instincts of man, to conquer, with their aid, the world of the senses...This way leads directly from the physical to the abstract because ... the descending tendency is at both ends of the manifested. [therefore the left-hand path] may utilize even eroticism and drunkenness as a means of spiritual achievement."(11)

Clearly the left-hand path in Hinduism is associated both with the idea of *dis-integration* (separation) and with the practice of antinomianism— of "going against the grain" of conventions in order to gain spiritual power.

Within the Sanskrit terminology of the Indian sects, the right-hand path is that which seeks a union or merger between the *jivatman*, the individual self or soul and the *paramatman*, the supreme or universal soul. The left-hand path seeks only to differentiate the *jivatman*, articulate, individuate, evolve and immortalize it— without ever consciously seeking to merge it permanently with anything else.(12)

One who has attained this union with the *jivatman* is said to be in a state of *jivan-mukti*— or an individually liberated state. The classic exposition of the concept of *jivan-mukti* is found in a 14th century text by Vidyaranya (died 1386) *Jivanmuktiviveka.*(13) The idea of "liberation in life" was perhaps formally introduced by Samkara (655-687 CE) and it remains an important component of *Advaita Vedanta*— based on Samkara's reading and interpretations of the Upanishads. The *Trpti-dipika* by Vidyaranya contains discussions of lives of *jivanmuktas.*

The Left-Hand Path in Hinduism

In recent times the most insightful and important studies of left-hand path spirituality in the Hindu religious context are the brilliant presentations of the teachings of the mysterious and shadowy Indian sage Vimalananda by the American Ayurvedic physician Robert Svaboda— *Aghora: At the Left Hand of God* (1986) and *Aghora II: Kundalini* (1993).

In general "Hinduism" is the name for a spectrum of religious sects all of which are based on the ancient Aryan tradition ultimately rooted in the *Vedas*. There are hundreds of sects within Hinduism. Often they hold opposing views on what might seem to be fundamental questions. There are, however, generally things upon which most of these

sects agree: 1) that the *Veda* contains infallible wisdom, 2) that the soul (*atman*) is immortal and real, 3) that the soul undergoes continual rebirth (*samsara*), 4) that this rebirth is tantamount to suffering, and 5) that the cause of rebirth and its suffering is action (*karman*). The aim of orthodox Hindnism is a cessation of rebirth and/or fusion with the universal absolute.(14) This fusion with the Absolute is called liberation (*moksha* or *mukti*). It is in the *methods* used to effect this end that the Hindu sects are so diverse.

The major sects of Hinduism are Vaisnavite (derived from the worship of Vishnu) and Saivite (derived from the worship of Shiva). These major sects are further divided into hundreds of sub-divisions. At one extreme end of the spectrum of Hindu "sects" are the philosophical schools chiefly found among the Brahmins. At the other extreme are found the tantric cults. These are rarely strictly Vedic and are often anti-Brahmanic. It is, however, a great mistake to think that all tantric sects are of the left-hand path.

Since the time of the rise of Buddhism (6th-7th century BCE) there can be said to have been truly heretical sects in Hinduism. Heresy as such would only tend to be a "problem" in a religion with an elaborate fixed dogma. Hinduism is remarkably free of these dogmas since its pre-historic transition from the Vedic religion. It is for this reason that sects and philosophies making up a wide spectrum of ideologies can be found within Hinduism and why what is called the left-hand path can be tolerated within the fold of Hinduism without its being entirely "orthodox."

This toleration of the left-hand path traditions does not stem from any enforced or legislated moral sense of "fair play," but rather from the fact that the original *multiplicity of paths* inherent in the archaic Indo-European system has been preserved in the Indian ways— both Hinduism and Buddhism. When the *ideal* is a many hued spectrum of variation, from left to right, and from bottom to top, the likelihood of developing dichotomized thinking in terms of black/white is lessened. Typically they do not think in terms of "this or that," but rather "this *and* that." In this system a sense of layers of meaning and reality is vigorously preserved. This underlying sense provides for a *systemic* tolerance more enduring than anything imposed dogmatically or legislatively. This does not mean, however, that orthodox followers of the right-hand path would typically think that the left-hand path is just as valid as their own path. It remains a trait of the right-hand path to think in terms of either/or, so most typically the orthodox will simply think of the practitioners of the left-hand path (or any path other than their own) as simply being "wrong," or in error. This is explicitly outlined in the *Vaikhanasasmarta Sutra* (4th century CE) of the Visaragas who are said to "walk the wrong path."(15)

Within Hinduism (as elsewhere) the left-hand path can be distinguished first in a description of its aims or goals, and then in its techniques or methods. According to some self-proclaimed practitioners of the *vamamarga* the final destination of the left-hand path is the same as the right-hand path. It is said that they are two paths to the same end. But it remains a matter of the perspective of the speaker as to what the exact character of this end is.

Strictly speaking in Hinduism the aim of the practitioner of the left-hand path (*vamamarga*) is the individual's union with the individual soul (*jivatman*) and the continued independence of that realized *jivatman* from the universal or supreme soul (*paramatman*).(16) Another way of putting this might be that the follower of the *vamamarga* seeks to actualize his individual self (*atman*) — the personal divinity — and then maintain the ongoing independence and freedom of that individuated self.

Historically, this is not that much, if any, different from the archaic Indo-European beliefs which held that men could become as gods if they lived heroic or magical lives. The "metaphysic" is the same as it always was, there has just been a revaluation, or new value judgment, placed on the life of struggle and victory or defeat. Where the ancients saw it as a glorious existence— which they wanted to perpetuate throughout eternity— the "reformers" of Hinduism and Buddhism both saw this same "*cycle of becoming*" (*samsara*) as "suffering."

Among others, Julius Evola recognizes that the Tantras actually carry on the oldest tradition of the Vedas — as *understood in the Vedic Age itself*:

> It is through this [operative] worldview that a part of the spirit of the early Vedic age, despite all, remains alive in the Tantras. In that age humans did not live as ascetics, struggling with the world and with *samsara*, but rather as free, uninhibited forces, in the company of various gods and supernatural energies, rapt in a state of cosmic and triumphant bliss.(17)

Left-Hand Path Hinduism

Since the division into *dakshinachara* and *vamachara* is a relatively late one in the history of Hinduism— perhaps going back no more than a thousand to fifteeen-hundred years — the sects of Hinduism which strictly can be said to belong to the *vamamarga* do not formally belong to the most archaic levels of historic Vedic religion. The technical term "left-hand path" actually comes from Hindu tantrism, of course. In the more global way that I am presenting the left-hand path it does not, however, have to be limited to tantric sects alone. Nevertheless discussions of the left-hand path fall most naturally within the framework of tantrism.(18)

Some tantric texts identify seven "paths" or "ways" (Skt. *acharas*). These are divided into the "right-path" (*dakshinachara*) and the "left-path" (*vamachara*) and certain other paths belong within these two.(19)

dakshinachara	*vamachara*
Vedachara	*Siddantachara*
Vaisnavachara	*Kaulachara*
Saivachara	

It is said that one is born into one of the *dakshinacharas*, but that one must be *initiated into* any of the *Vamacharas*.(20) This is certainly in keeping with the often found non-natural tendencies found within the left-hand path elsewhere. Merely to follow the path *dictated* by nature, by birth, is to conform to outer circumstances. But to rebel against one's lot, to determine consciously and willfully what one's path is to be is an exercise of the faculty which sets the initiate apart from his environment.

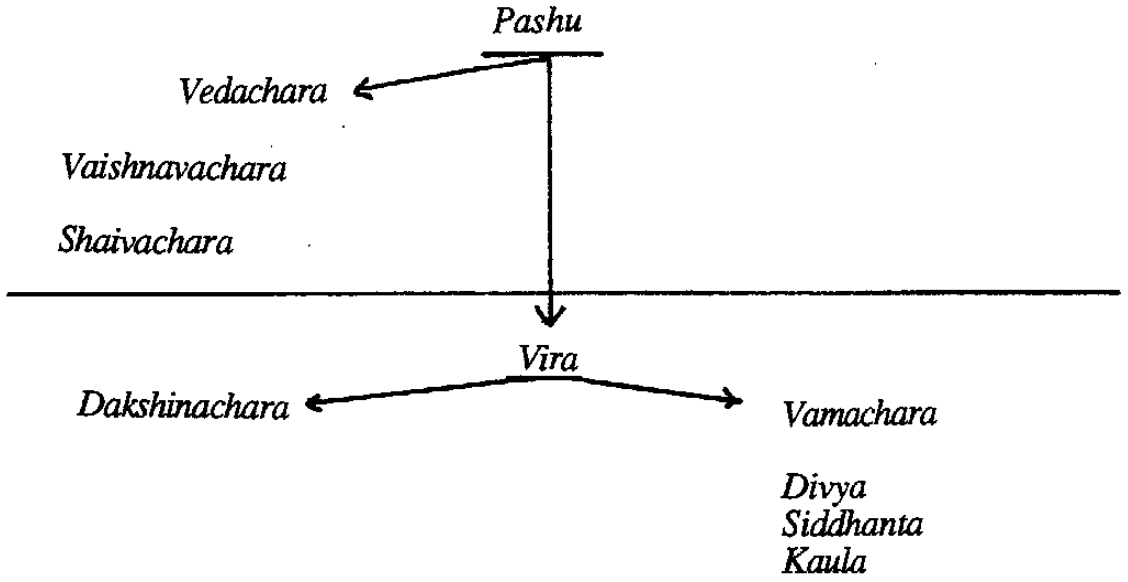
The three levels of initiation in preparation for the *vamachara* are:

1) *Pashu*
2) *Vira*
3) *Divya*

The *pashu* is the "fettered man." This is the non-initiated individual soul. The *pashu* transforms himself into a *vira* through the efforts of his own will. A *vira* can be recognized by his politeness, courage, intelligence and activity. One the stage of *vira* has been established one becomes eligible for initiation into either the *dakshinacha* or the *vamachara*. If he goes into the right-hand path he will follow the ways of *bakhti* (devotion) and/or *jnana* (knowledge), but on the *vamachara* he will also learn *shakti-mantra* (mental power-patterns) and the *panchatattva* (five-elements)— both forms of theory and practice which include sexual rituals. The *divya* state is achieved when all of the qualities the initiate has gathered have "become part and parcel of himself, when they cannot be dissociated from his own entity."(21)

Another way of looking at the various "paths" is that the Vedic, *Vaishnava*, and *Shaiva* are meant for *pashus*, the*dakshinachara* and *vamachara* are for *viras*, and the *siddhanta* and *kaula* are only open to the *divyas* of the left-hand path.(22) Although the *kaulachara* can be practiced symbolically by right-hand path initiates as well. (See figure 2.2.)

The Paths of the Hindu Sects



The *Kulavana-tantra* categorizes the *viras* of the *Vamachara* into several categories or levels: 1) *kshatriyas* (characterized by boldness and indifference to danger), 2) *siddhas* (who have reached a level of perfection, and who may be called "adept"), 3) *kaulas* (whose "law" [*kaladharma*] obliterates all others).(23)

Vimalananda uses the word *siddha* to mean "...one who has achieved immortality and supernatural powers as a result of *sadhana*" [spiritual practice].(24)

Concerning the *kaulas* Evola remarks:

> Nothing is forbidden to the *kaula* and to those who have achieved the condition of true *siddha-vira*, since they *are* and they *know*. They are lords of their passions, and they fully identify with Shakti [power]. As the supreme Shakti, or Parashakti, is over and beyond any pair of opposites, likewise the *kaula* is beyond good and evil, honor and dishonor, merit and sin, and any other value cherished by ordinary people, the so-called pashus.(25)

Shakti (Power) is often referred to as being "absolutely free," and by the same token the *kaula* is called *svecchakari* ("one who can do as he or she pleases"). Pashus, or ordinary people, will often fear, shun or condemn the *kaulas* because of their behavior, or simply for their presence.(26)

One of the significant differences between the two tantric paths, although both are under the aegis of Shiva, is that on the right-hand path the adept always experiences "someone above him," even at the highest level of realization. However, on the left-hand path the adept "becomes the ultimate sovereign" (*chakravartin* = world ruler).(27)

In a more general sense, and in a structure reminiscent of the levels of man outlined by the Italian Renaissance Neoplatonic philosopher Pico della Mirandola discussed in chapter 6 of this book), Vimalananda lays out three levels at which various types of humans can exist: as a *khara* (donkey), a *nara* ("man"), or as a *Narayana* ("God Himself"). The *khara* is said to believe "only in the three lowest chakras" (= eating, procreating, excreting) and that his realm is that of *abhibhautika* (the mundane). The *nara*, or true human, is said to live

exclusively in the upper three chakras. It is further stated that only a few *naras* live in the world at any given time. Their realm is that of the *adhyatmika* (the spiritual). Only a *nara* can become a *Narayana*— and technically they are said to do this by gaining access to the secret chakras located within in the head. (These are discussed below.) The realm in which he *narayana* lives is called the *adhidaivika* (or "astral").(28)

Vamacharins may be found most commonly among persons belonging to sects devoted to the gods Ganesha, Rudra, Vishnu, Shiva, Svayambhu, Veda, Bhairava, Ksetrapala, China, Kapalika, Pashupata, Bauddha, Kerala, Vira-Vaishnava, Sambhava, Chandra and Aghora or to the goddesses Kali, Tara, Sundari, Bharavi, Chinnamasta, Matangi and Vagala. Here it is wise to keep in mind that the right-hand path and left-hand path are *methods* or approaches rather than sects in and of themselves.

Methods of the Hindu Left-Hand Path

Although *vamacharins* can be found in any of the various cults mentioned above, it is principally in the method of worshiping *The Goddess* (= Vama) — in the form of a human woman or symbols of her — that especially the male *vamacharin* will practice the left-hand path. Besides meaning "left," the Sanskrit word *vama* can also mean woman, or the Goddess.(29) The real meaning behind this is that The Goddess and Woman are thought to be the embodiments of *shakti*, power.(30) Here it is quite clear, at least from the masculine perspective, that the essence of the *vamachara* is the total transformation of the human initiate into something superhuman or god(dess)-like. This lies at the root of why antinomianism (inversions of all kinds of normatives) is so important in the methodology of eastem forms of the left-hand path.

An often overlooked aspect of both individualism and antinomianism in the Indian systems of the left-hand path is contained in the doctrines of *hatha yoga*. Literally the Sanskrit word *hatha* means "violence," or "violent effort," though it has come to refer to yogic methods which primarily focus on the physical vehicle, the human body.(31) The practice of pure *hatha yoga* is said to be able to produce *jivanmukti*— and to give immortality to the individualized existence by preserving "all psycho-physical energies."(32) The Upanishads state: "Every god is enclosed here, in the body." The Tantras valorize the body and *individual existence*: "Jiva is Sadashiva" [= Shiva in his pure aspect of 'being']. In the Tantras, as in the Vedic Age, there is no contempt for the body— on the contrary there is the enjoyment and exploration of it for the revelation of secrets it affords.(33)

Extemally, one of the chief distinguishing features between the methods of the *dakshinamarga* and the *vamamarga* is that the *dakshinacharin* practices "worship through substitutes," while the *vamacharin* actualizes what is otherwise only symbolic. He may have to participate in exercises of cruelty and other aberrations of social and religious norms as a way of placing himself totally outside profane society. Thereby he is "unfettered" from the bonds and tabus of society as a way of unfettering himself from spiritual bonds.(34) (Remember the virtual identity between spiritual order and social order, as indicated in the Indian caste system.) The methodology of the left-hand path appears to be by far the more archaic of the two.(35)

One of the chief principles of left-hand path tantric practice is to attain liberation (here called *yoga*) while still being able to have enjoyment (*bhoga*). The method which makes this possible involves the identification (*smadhi*) of the individual self with a higher self *while* in a state of enjoyment (*bhoga*).(36) The *Kularnava Samhita* (5.219) states: "Through enjoyment one gains liberation; for enjoyment is the means of reaching the Supreme Abode. Hence the wise who wish to conquer [the spirit] should experience all pleasures."

Vimalananda alludes to a reason left-hand path practitioners do not unify with the divinity outside himself. It is simply because they enjoy loving the divine object so much, and being in Her company, that they control their thoughts and emotions to be able to better enjoy the reality of the "company of the Beloved."(37)

Those on the *vamamarga* eventually reject totally the methods and rituals of the *dakshinamarga* as being inefficient or of no real help in their progress. They may, however, continue to worship their deity during the day in a traditional way while they perform rites of the *vamachara* at night. Night worship is often a feature of antinomian schools.

Vimalananda distinguishes between two "ways"— that of *jnana* ("knowledge") and that of *bhakti* ("devotion"). In *jnana* the disciple is said to split from his normal body and to self-identify with his "causal body"— and from that point on one follows the *adesha* ("commands") of an internal guru. In *bhakti*, on the other hand, the disciple maintains continuous devotion to an entity conceived of as being outside the self. In discussing the question of unity with a divinity, in this case Krishna, Vimalananda says: "But most devotees of Krishna never want to unite with Him; they always want to maintain their own identities so that they taste His sweetness over and over again, forever and ever."(38)

From a left-hand path perspective Svaboda adds further that "... on the path of *jnana* you actually become Shiva, while on the path of *bhakti* you worship but remain separate from Krishna."(39) The distinction is an important one, and one that must be understood well. It seems universal in the practice of the left-hand path. On the path of *jnana* the practitioner is himSelf transformed into a being of the divine *typos* without sacrificing his individuated existence, whereas on the left-hand path of *bhakti* the practitioner seeks the company of the divine counterpart and exists in the presence of this divinity without *unifying with it*.(40)

Antinomianism is an element found in many schools of the left-hand path throughout the world. In each school the practice or philosophy has its own *raison d'etre*, but underlying them all is the left-hand path imperative to *transform*— one's self and one's world. In order to transform something, it must first be de-formed before it can be re-formed into the willed transformed object. In order to re-construct something, that thing must be de-constructed. This postmodern idea is very ancient indeed.

When discussing antinomian left-handed tantrism Renou states "... we observe the inversion of normal worship and common ethical principles. The fact that those objects are 'worshiped' is evidence that the stage has been passed at which they would be considered sinful."(41) So objects or practices which would normally iuspire shame, hate or fear in the orthodox (*dakshinachara*) Hindu will be willfully worshipped and engaged in with a sublimated attitude of sacrality— in order to cut the so-called three knots of shame-hate-fear. "The fundamental principle of the left-hand path is that spiritual progress cannot be achieved by falsely shunning our desires and passions, but by sublimating those very aspects which make one fall, as a means of liberation."(42)

According to Danielou the *Kularnave Tantra* [625] informs us that "'the lord-of tears' (Rudra) has shown in the left-hand doctrine that spiritual advancement is best achieved by means of those very things which are the causes of man's downfall."(43)

In discussing the *Kulavana-tantra* Evola further relates that the work of the *vira* on the path to becoming a *divya* consists of *icchashuddhi* ("purification of the will"). This pure will is characterized as being *naked, transcendent, capable of self-determination, beyond all antithetical values and all pairs of opposites*. In the practice of *icchashuddhi* the following eight bonds or fetters must be broken systematically: *daya* "sympathy," *moha* "delusion," *lajja* "shame" or "the idea of sin," *bhaya* "fear," *ghrina* "disgust," *kula* "family, kinship, clan," *varna* "caste," *sila* "customary rites and precepts."(44) As each of these bonds or fetters is broken the *vira* becomes progressively more liberated.

In many ways this technique of *icchashuddhi* is reminiscent of Anton LaVey's injunction that his followers should *indulge* in the "seven deadly sius" of Christianity — greed, pride, envy, anger, gluttony, lust and sloth — in order to liberate themselves similarly from the conditionings of modern western civilization.(45)

Part of the reason why such techniques are considered effective in Hindu practice is that we are now living in what is called a *Kali Yuga*— a phase of history characterized by

materialism and a lack of interest in spiritual matters. In this kind of age "passion alone, when astutely directed, can overcome egoism and pride and sorid calculation. Alone it has the momentum to draw man away from the bonds that chain him to his interests, his beliefs."(46)

The real importance of antinomianism lies in how it relates to the individual soul (*jivatman*) and how it is to be transformed into a divine being. This is effected by the union of the personality with its personal divinity, the *jivatman* itself. The limitations, or bonds, placed on the *jiva* (self) both internally and externally. Merger of the Self with the *jivatman* is impossible so long as the eight bonds constrict the will of the *vira*.

Although in the tantric context none of this can be equated with crude "egotism" an element of a "divine egoism" can be discerned in the teaching that the western face of Shiva, which is red, and which is called *Vamadeva* ("Left-handed Deity") is equated with "I-ness," the *ahamkara*, which is associated with fire, sight and action.(47)

Such radical *individualism* is essential to the character of the left-hand path. Svaboda relates that seekers should "...try to redirect their urge to individuation from Maya [unconsciousness/objectivity] to Chit [consciousness/subjectivity]" and should not allow themselves "to be carried along by the current of their lives and of their neighbors' lives."(48) He further states: "Aghoris never permit themselves to be passively defined by the external environment; they define themselves and by so doing define their surroundings."(49) In a way reminiscent of the cosmo-psychological system of laws taught by G.I. Gurdjieff, Svaboda also relates:

> ...all of us are part of the manifested universe, subject to its laws until we develop the power to redefine ourselves in other terms. A Tantric aims to become *sva-tantra* ("self-functioning"), to be free of all limitations, including especially the limitations of his or her own personality.(50)

The theme of the *creative* aspect of the practice of the left-hand path will be noticeable in many schools around the world and throughout history. The practice of the left-hand path is not simply a matter of finding a "program" and working with it— on the leftward way one does not worship a god but rather one *enacts divinity from a subjective perspective.* When describing the development of doctrines within Aghora, Svaboda says: "... precepts [are] engraved not on tablets of stone but on the heart of the individual practitioner who must use them to create an individual system, thereby carving his or her own spiritual niche."(51)

Antinomianism includes the notion of (especially for men) Goddess "worship." The *vamacharin* does not merely worship the Goddess in the form of a woman, but he himself seeks to *become a woman.* This *may* have its roots in a historical development in which men took over the priesthood function from women, and thus to practice that function with its timeless authority the men had to "become women." In support of this idea are facts such as practices in which priests wear feminine robes to certain rites, or the myths and legends which show men transforming themselves into women.(52) This may be true on a historical level. However, there is a more profound and eternal, ahistorical principle of which these practices and beliefs may also be reflections. In Indian (and perhaps Indo-European) lore the structure or essence of a subtle or spiritnal body attached to or contained within the physical body is thought to be feminine— at least for men. That is, there is a spiritual entity of the opposite sex within each person. (This is echoed in the lore of Iran, with its *farvashis*, and in Scandinavia, with its *fylgjur*, *hamingjur*, etc., not to mention the highly sympathetic modem psychology of C. G. Jung.) In the Indian system we also learn many technical details demonstrating why and how this is so. The seven major *padmas* (lotuses) or *chakras* (wheels) are said to be the seven seats of femininity inherent in every human being— each of these is the seat of a *shakti* (power) which is, of course, also feminine in nature.(53) So by awakening these *shaktis* and activating the *padmas* or

chakras (through the force of *kundalini*, serpent force, also feminine) the *vamacharin* slowly (or quickly) transforms himself into the Goddess within and thus "becomes a woman." He has undergone a transformation into his "opposite."

In a left-hand path context the aghori sage Vimalananda relates that the aim of *kundalini yoga* is to reunite Shiva and Shakti, in order to re-create Shiva in his eternal form as (*Sadashiva*). "Sadashiva's left side is female and right side is male; the two principles have united but have not merged. If they were to merge that would be the end of the play [*lila*], and that would be no fun at all."(54) Here it should be carefully noted that Vimalananda subtly distinguishes between *union* and *merger*. His ultimate reason for wanting to avoid merger hinges on the *pleasure* he would lose if such a merger were to occur.

The essential principle behind how the *kundalini shakti* (serpent-power) is caused to rise in the body depends on the ability to *reverse* the ordinary or usual (i.e. *natural*) flow-patterns of force in the body. The *prana*-energy, which naturally flows *upward* and *inward* in the body is made to flow downward and outward, and the *apana*-energy, which ordinarily flows *downward* and/or *outward* is caused to flow upward or outward. When these two meet, contrary to their normal paradigm of motion, it is said that they "kiss," and it is then that *kundalini shakti* begins to rise. Here it is clear that "antinomianism" in the tantric system has extended itself even into the realm of esoteric physiology.

In the usual, or right-hand path, practice of *kundalini yoga* the purpose is to reach the *sahasrara chakra* above the head. But it seems that from left-hand path perspective the pint is only to raise the serpent power to the sixth chakra, or *anja-chakra* ("command-center")—and from there to enter into the three hidden chakras. These are the secret chakras of *golata*, *lalata* and *lalana* located on the uvula at he back of the throat, above the anja chakra and within the soft palate respectively. The aghori or left-hand path tantric will not merge with the *sahasrara* wherein all discrimination between *this* and *that*, between "I" and "not-I," or "I" and "Thou" disappear would disappear. But, as Vimalananda would say, that would be no fun.

Vamacharins are actually known to engage in various practices considered nefarious by more orthodox *dakshinacharins*. Among the *aghora* sects, for example, acts of necrophilia and cannibalism are known. These and other practices are not engaged in for perverse pleasure, but rather they are dependent on the fact that they represent deep seated cultural and religious taboos. It is by breaking these taboos and going beyond the barriers of good and evil that the *aghora* attains new levels of power and "liberation" (from his human limitations).

The word *aghora* literally means "the Non-Fearful," and this quality is equated with the southern face of the five-faced Shiva. This face is blue-black in color, and embodies the principle-of-intellect (*buddhi tattva*) or eternal law (*dharma*).(55)

More usual than engaging in these extreme forms, however, are the milder practices of sexual mysticism. Many of these are meant to break down social, sexual, as well as dietary taboos. "Tantrism" has been used as a synonym for "sexual magic" in the west since the appearance of popular treatments of the subject in the 1960s and 1970s. There is much more to the tantric tradition than sexual mysticism, but especially the left-hand tantrics do make actual sexual rituals a part of their practices.(56)

The most essential form of sexual mysticism is contained in the rite called *panchamakara* ("five-M's"). This is described in the *Kalivilasa Tantra* (X-XI), but there warning is also given that it must be practiced only with initiated women. The "five-M's" refer to five elements used in the ritual, the Sanskrit names for all of which begin with the letter "M:" *matsya*, fish; *mamsa*, meat; *madya*, intoxicating drink; *mudra*, cereal; and *maithuna*, coitus.

On the right-hand path substitute substances are traditionally used: incense, food, sandalwood, a lamp and flowers. In either case there is a regular correspondence to the five traditional Hindu elements, or *tattvas*: aether, water, earth, fire and air respectively.

In a typical performance of the *panchamakara* on the left-hand path the two celebrants partake of the four food items before entering into an act of sexual yoga. These elements have been described as aphrodisiacs, and they are also usually considered taboo substances (generally thought to be profane by the orthodox Hindus) which have been sacralized through mental discipline and tantric practice. In other words, the substances and acts involved in the *panchamakara* are usually thought to be instruments of *bondage*, and therefore to be counterproductive to liberation— but the left-hand path practitioner uses these substances and experiences for the purpose of raising *kundalini* and is not used by them.

Another important variation of the sexual ritual is the rite known as *chakra puja* (circle worship). Here a whole group of tantrics engage in a sexual ritual in which men and women are paired by chance. One way of doing this is by the women throwing their bodices (*choli*) into a basket and having each of the men take a bodice from the receptacle. The woman to whom that bodice belongs will be his ritual partner for the night— be that woman his wife, sister, mother, or whatever. The participants will all sit in a circle, alternating male/female, with the man's partner always sitting on his *left*. This is the probable origin of the term "left-*hand* path," and also shows the ritual correlation between *woman* and *left*. In the middle of the circle a single girl — usually very young — is worshipped by the chief officiating priest. The rite, which lasts for several hours, ends in a collective *panchamakara*.(57)

These and similar tantric rites are not as straightforward to interpret as they might seem at first. An important element in their functioning clearly seems to be the idea of antinomianism— the sanctification of the profane. But the attitude of erotic enjoyment evident in advanced practices seems to indicate that this is not a continuing factor. The original magical or psychologically transformative aspect might have been the overcoming of inhibition and the breaking of conventional taboos, but once this stage is past the activities continue in a new re-sacralized sense. The fact that the relatively mild sexual and dietary taboos have beeu broken may contribute to the practices of more extreme sects which seek to push back even stronger taboos. Some sects reinterpret the five-M's to mean *meha*, urine; *mamsa*, human flesh; *mala*, excrement; *medha*, juice (i.e. blood); and *mehana*, penis (i.e. semen). But perhaps in keeping with the two poles or schools within the left-hand path, there are also those at the other extreme who interpret these "five essentials" (*panchatattvas*) not as carnal realities, but as spiritual symbols. Always the overriding factor seems to be the idea of a Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte*— a re-valuation of all values. Barriers are broken, social and psychological chaos created, out of which a new, revivified, renewed and transformed order can emerge according to the will of the tantric.

Commonly the left-hand path tantric is said to be able to ingest poisons — perhaps symbolic of substances which hinder liberation — with nothing but beneficial results. This is made possible once the tantric has become [a] Shiva, that is **realized** his real Self or Soul, he possesses the power of Shiva to convert everything which he ingests into *amrita* (the divine nectar of immortality, or non-death).(58) The magical principle transforming or "purifying" any substance or experience to serve the purposes of the pure Will of the magician is typical at all levels of the left-hand path.

Another important *vamachara* technique which involves the reversal of norms or natural tendencies is that of the control of the flow of semen. On the surface this appears to be one of those many magico-technical aspects only tangential to the purpose of this study. But the *rationale* behind it, if not the philosophical sophistication or actual objective effectiveness, is an important left-hand path statement.

Among tantrics semen is thought of as the essence of Shiva,(59) and as long as they are able to retain it or reabsorb it they will have immortality. In esoteric tantric physiology it is conceptualized that the semen, or the spiritual component of it (Skt. *bindu*), has its origin in the crown *chakra sahasrara* and is normally and naturally transmitted downward through a subtle artery (*nadi*) and ejaculated and lost. This loss is a loss of power, self-hood, and life.(60)

It then becomes the task of the tantric adept to reverse the natural process in some way so that he can retain and reabsorb this spiritual substance. So the tantric may arrest the ejaculation, causing the *bindu* to rise again in reverse direction back to the crown of the head nourishing and empowering self-hood and immortality. Or a similar effect may be gained by ejaculating into the *yoni* (vulva) and then drawing it back up through the penis and up the subtle *nadi* to the crown *chakra*. It is also possible to ingest orally the "fallen" *bindu*.(61) Similar beliefs were perhaps held by certain Gnostic sects in which there was often talk of the "power to reverse the river Jordan."(62)

In Hindu tantrism the importance of actual *worship* of Shakti in the form of womankind and the physical vulva makes it more likely that practices involving emission of semen and its mixture with female emissions before reabsorption takes place are more common than in Buddhistic tantrism.(63)

What is important here is the left-hand path technique or philosophical model of inverting or reversing *natural* processes through the power of will and consciousness. By being able to reverse natural "flow patterns," be they in the body (subjective) or in the world (objective), practitioners of the left-hand path demonstrate or exercise their independence from the natural universe— thus establishing that which is divine in their individualities (*jivatman*). This it seems is the central philosophical and magical statement underlying the machinations of the tantric semen cult.

The concept of the sovereign power of a "lord" is highly consistent with the Hindu terminology surrounding those called *mahapurushas* or "great-souled" ones. These exist in four grades or levels of power: 1) *siddha* "an immortal one of special ability," 2) *nath* "master," 3) *muni* (or *mauni*) "silent one," and 4) *rishi* "seer."(64)

The *vamamarga* appears to be a path consistent with Hinduism's most archaic roots and to be a logical flowering of certain aspects of Indo-European thought. The development of the individual self (*jivatman*) to the level of a divinity — and the maintenance of that level of being for eternity — never seeking the final liberation or total annihilation of the individual self in the universal self (*paramatman* or *brahman*) is the clear goal of the original vitality of Indo-European thought.

The Left-Hand Path in Buddhism

In Buddhism the position of the left-hand path is more philosophically paradoxical, but in fact and practice it is perhaps no less prevalent than in Hinduism. The reason the Buddhist left-hand path is paradoxical is that the very foundation of Buddhism lies on the basis that *there is no individual self*— that such a concept is only an illusion created by the mind. The Hindu holds that the self does exist, as do the gods and goddesses. The Buddhists original denial of these assertions, as well as their rejection of the ultimate validity of the *Vedas*, are the main reasons they were themselves rejected as heretics in India. Originally Buddhism was not so much a *religion* as it was a *technique* or *method* of "enlightenment." or the realization of the nirvanic state. Historically many elements have accrued to the Buddhist method as it adapted itself to local cults and social conditions throughout Asia.

The historical Siddhartha Gautama, called the Buddha ("Awakened One"), died in 544 BCE. He was an Indian (Aryan) prince of a Ksatriya (warrior) tribe paradoxically using a Brahmanic clan name— Gautama, "descendant of the sage Gotama. Siddharta established a radical teaching for gaining enlightenment. This teaching is based on the so-called Four Noble Truths: 1) life is inherently full of suffering (Pali *dukka*), 2) that suffering is due to craving (Pali *tanha*), 3) suffering can be stopped by "eradication of craving" (Pali *nibbana*, Skt. *nirvana*), 4) "eradication of craving" can be achieved by following the Noble Eightfold Path (Pali *ariya*). This Eightfold Path consists of: 1) right understanding, 2) right thinking, 3) right speech, 4) right action, 5) right livelihood, 6) right effort, 7) right mindfulness (contemplation), 8) right meditation (one pointedness of mind). By following the Eightfold Path the practitioner will gain the awakened state of Buddha-hood.

Buddhism at this level is a highly developed and sophisticated doctrine which epitomizes the right-hand path. The root of this can be easily understood by analyzing the first of the Four Noble Truths. In a chain of causation, sorrow is equated with ignorance, ignorance causes imagination, imagination causes consciousness of self, which causes embodied existence, which gives rise to the senses, which cause perception. Perceptions cause emotion, emotion causes craving (*tanha*), craving causes attachment (to the things craved), attachment leads to becoming, which leads to rebirth— the principal phenomenon equated with "suffering" in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The ignorance which started the whole chain in motion is equated with an ignorance of the nature of the universe, that it is full of sorrow (*dukka*), instability or becoming (*anicca*), and "lack of self" (*anatta*). If Buddhists had remained true to those fundamental philosophical stances and practices, there could be no talk of a Buddhist left-hand path.

The most "orthodox" — or simplest — school of Buddhism has come to be referred to as Theravada ("teaching of the elders"), and is strongest in southern Buddhism in Sri Lanka and southeastern Asia. But beginning around the 1st - 2nd centuries CE learned monks began to develop a more esoteric tradition which came to be known as the *mahayana* ("greater vehicle"). In this context Theravada is often referred to as the *hinayana* ("lesser vehicle"). *Mahayana* eventually came to dominate in the north, in Tibet, China and Japan. The orthodox view is that each person is fully responsible for his own enlightenment and that the realm of bliss, *nirvana*, is fully separate from the realm of illusion, or *maya* (the phenomenal world).

There was a tendency in *mahayana* to bridge the gap of absolute separateness between *nirvana* and *maya*. One way was found in the doctrine of the *boddhisattva*, "one bound for awakening." A *boddhisattva* was a near perfected being who could effect the enlightenment or development of less awakened people through a kind of magical intervention from his ascended state. (This doctrine, as found in Tibetan Buddhism, is apparently the main source for later ideas of "unknown superiors," "secret chiefs," and mahatmas found in certain Masonic, quasi-masonic and Theosophical schools in the west.)

Philosophically a certain school within the *mahayana* (called *madhyamika*) claimed that in fact there was no difference between *maya* and *nirvana*— both were equally void (*sunyata*) or alternately that the phenomenal world (*maya*) exists only in the mind of the perceiver.

These ideas might remind the reader of the "sense data" theories of the British philosophers George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776), whose application of empiricism led them to conclude that we can only know the subjective contents of our minds as fed by impressions made upon them by the senses. The "reality" of the world outside our minds is uncertain. Already in ancient times the epistemologies of Hinduism and Buddhism had passed through the radical stages of subjective observation that would only be possible in the west after the demise of the intellectual hegemony of Christianity. (See chapter 6.)

The most striking development within the *mahayana* is the emergence of the *vajrayana* ("thunderbolt or diamond vehicle"), especially prevalent in Tibet. Philosophically, the *vajrayana* is virtually synonymous with Tibetan Buddhist tantrism. Thus, if *maya* = *nirvana* then indulgence in the phenomenal world can lead to the world of bliss. *Maya* is used to attain *nirvana*. In practical terms this opens the way to antinomianism. "Profane" things are made "pure" as an exercise of the mind. *Vajrayana* is heavily influenced on a philosophical and practical level by Indian (Hindu) tantrism, indigenous Tibetan religion (Bön), and central Asian shamanism. Again in an antinomian spirit the over-culture absorbs techniques from the under-culture.

In Buddhism, as in Hinduism, the left-hand path ends not in the absorption or annihilation of individuality in *moksha* or *nirvana* but in a perpetuation of that individuality on a more permanent plane of existence. Within Buddhist terminology, the practitioner of the left-hand path aims to attain only to the boddhisattvic state— and to remain there as a deity— "angelic" or "demonic." The final annihilation is resisted.

Of course, when we look at the original Buddhist teachings, such aims are theoretically antithetical to the very premise of Buddhism. But in the history of religious ideas such contradictions often arise. Who would think, for example, that the teachings of the Nazarene, as reported in the Gospels, could be used to support such institutions as the Crusades and the Inquisition? So it is not surprising that Buddhism would develop within itself patterns out of synch with the founder's original intentions. Over the 1500 years following Gautama's death Buddhism spread from India in a largely peaceful way throughout the cultures of southeastern Asia, China, Tibet, Mongolia and Japan. With this kind of cultural diversity as its matrix, it is certainly no wonder that teachings at odds with those of the founder took root in the religious soil called Buddhism.

Left-hand path tantrism seems to have had various epicenters of development in the Buddhist world. Principal among these were Tibet and Bengal (present-day Bangladesh). In this latter region Buddhism was eventually driven out by Muslim conquest starting about 1200 CE, and from there it spread to Java and up to Nepal.

Methods of Left-Hand Path Bnddhism

One of the chief aspects of left-hand path Buddhism is its positive attitude toward sexuality. The left-hand path Buddhist accepts certain Shakta ideas that the creative energy or "potency" of a deity, angel, demon, or boddhisattva is personified as his wife or consort. In the left-hand path Buddhist tantra the *shaktis*, or female aspects of supermundane entities, are worshipped as lovers. The Buddhist tantrik seeks sexual union with these *shaktis* in order to draw on their power and to use the power gained from such unions for further spiritual development. Another chief feature of left-hand path tantric Buddhism is the utilization not only of "deities" or "angels," i.e. entities considered generally beneficent, but also of "demons" and their consorts. The god Bhairava ("the Terrible") is worshipped, and elaborate rites are performed in burial grounds. Also, sexual intercourse and other activities considered immoral by the general population are utilized as practices which lead to spiritual development or salvation.(65)

The Buddhist left-hand path tantrism holds that the passions and desires which the right-hand path seeks either to annihilate or sublimate can be utilized in their direct unsublimated forms as vehicles for "awakening."

Evans-Wentz cites the following technical instructions from the Tibetan Buddhist text called the "Epitome of the Great Symbol" (87-88):

> 87. Whatever thoughts, or concepts, or obscuring [or disturbing] passions arise are neither to be abandoned nor allowed to control one; they are to be allowed to arise without one's trying to direct [or shape] them. If one do no more than merely to recognize them as soon as they arise, and persist in so doing, they will come to be realized [or to dawn] in their true [or void] form through not being abandoned.
>
> 88. By that method, all things which may seem to be obstacles to spiritual growth can be made use of as aids on the Path. And therefore, the method is called "The utilizing of obstacles as aids on the Path."(66)

Left-hand path Buddhism, like so many other expressions of the left-hand path in the world, eschews institutional forms and socially acceptable norms. It tends more in the direction of individualized expression and socially unacceptable behaviors.

In actual sexual practice the male Buddhist left-hand path tantric is more likely to retain his seminal fluid totally, or having ejaculated it, to reingest it in its entirety orally. The retention of seed (Skt. *bija*) is tantamount to retaining power and vitality— both physical and mental. Also, it seems although there might be a generally more spiritually positive attitude toward sexuality and womankind in Buddhist left-hand path tantrism, there is still the fear that women, and especially female demonic entities, can vampirize men of their vital spiritual powers.(67)

In philosophical terms, the Buddhist left-hand path concentrates more on a subjective — intrapsychic — process. The Buddhist view would be that such polarities as implied by the male/female dichotomy (or that of the right-hand/left-hand path) are illusory creations of the mind of the individual. Practices are engaged in to demonstrate this illusory aspect. The Buddhist left-hand path practitioner will tend to create his own subjective internally complete and closed system, whereas the Hindu left-hand path practitioner will tend to acknowledge as real the objective existence of the Goddess (*Shakti*).

Practitioners who hold that the realm of the five senses is purely a construct of the mind and in reality the product of illusion (*maya*) may often rely on what appears to non-initiates to be chicanery and tricks involving slight of hand. If the world we see before us is an illusion, then the magician is pointing this out to us not by means of philosophical discourse, but by means of a direct attack on those senses and the ways they (mis-)inform the mind. Thus, what may at first glance appear to be an attempt at deception or trickery is in fact conceived of as the most direct method of teaching about the central fact (from a Buddhist perspective) that the world is a creation of the mind— a much more entertaining approach to the problems addressed by Plato's "Myth of the Cave."(68)

Because of the long-standing and continuing proliferation of doctrines and sects within both Hindu and Buddhist tantra/shakta no unifying or definitive summary of either what they believe or practice, or final conclusion on what distinguishes them, can be reached with certainty. It only seems certain that the desire for continued — if continually transformed — individuality, and lack-of-annihilation, are universal (even if often obscured in actual texts of the left-hand path *Tantras*).

The influence of the left-hand path as practiced by philosophies based on Indian-derived systems — both Hindu and Buddhist — on the modern western forms of the left-hand path has been enormous. Historically, it would seem that this influence came in at least two great waves. The first came perhaps with the opening of cultural channels between "east" and "west" occasioned by the conquests of Alexander (d. 323 BCE). Following this time there was a flood of ideas from the "east" (India and Iran) which formed and reformed sects in the Mediterranean region. These in turn exercised a secondary influence on India with Christian missions (often gnostic in character) beginning in the first century CE.(69) The second wave of influence from the eastern left-hand path is better documented. In essence it came originally as a result of another "conquest" from the west— the extension of the British Empire into India (beginning in the 18th century). As the west was again increasingly exposed to ideas stemming from India and Tibet eventually this filtered down to a more popular level of culture where it emerged in forms such as the Theosophical Society (founded 1875) and the *Ordo Templi Orientis* (founded 1896 or 1904). In both instances, as discussed in chapter 7, doctrines of left-hand path Hinduism and Buddhism played significant roles.

The forms of sexual magic taught by Aleister Crowley and his followers as well as the antinomian chicanery practiced by Anton LaVey have analogs in the left-hand path practices of India.

Zoroastrianism and the Left-Hand Path

No system of thought shaped the classical form of western left-hand path mythology more than Zoroastrianism. The idea that there is a whole hierarchy of the forces of good arrayed as if in a battle against a hierarchy of the forces of evil came to the west from Iranian religion (in one form or another) through Judaism or Gnosticism in some cases— or perhaps directly into the heathen north in other cases.(See chapter 3.) Originally the Iranian religious system differed little from the Vedic system of India. This is because the Aryans and Iranians are merely stems of the same branch of the Indo-European tree of cultures and religions.

Because the Iranian systems have lent themselves so much to western left-hand path mythology, and because they are themselves often so dualistic and concerned with matters of good *versus* evil, it is all the more surprising that when one analyzes the systems there is

very little underlying tension over the essential philosophical questions which differentiate the left-hand path from the right-hand path both east and west. Iranian systems seem to have characteristics which in some way or another belong to the left-hand path!

The study of Iranian religion is complex and obscured by the fact that the cultural basis and epicenter of it was destroyed by the Muslim conquest of Iran over a thousand years ago. Many Zoroastrians escaped to India (the Parsis) where they continue the religion, and some non-Islamic practitioners of various forms of Iranian religion (including Zoroastrianism) have survived in Iran to this day. But their schools of sophisticated thonght have long since been shattered.

Zoroaster (or Zarathustra), who probably lived around the time 500 BCE,(70) was essentially a reformer of the Iranian religion as practiced by various tribal groups. He was himself trained as a priest or *zaotar* of this sacrificial religion. Even before Zoroaster the Iranian system had developed highly dualistic tendencies(71) which would continually find expression in Iranian religions both within Zoroastrianism and outside it. Zoroaster's reforms seem to have been aimed at creating a *moralistic* dualism within a theoretically "monotheistic" system. Zoroaster's chief opponents in his efforts were the ultra-conservative representatives of the old Indo-Iranian order— the *mairyas* organized in *haenas* or "men's' societies." This appears to be a logical opposition as monotheism would tend to divest the ruling *class* of its power and invest that power in a single ruler or *Shah.*

The *haenas* were the repositories of archaic religious practice and culture. They practiced animal sacrifice (especially of horses and cattle), and drank a holy intoxicating liquid (*haoma*, cf. Skt. *soma*). They were a society of horse-riding warriors who were accompanied on their ways by a troop of women called *jahikas* or *jahis*, who sometimes fonght along side the warriors, but who were certainly the concubines of the men. On the spiritual level these *jahis* were reflected by the *farvashis* who were the protective and empowering souls of the warriors. The word *jahi* later became the name of the chief demoness of the Zoroastrians, Jahi or Jeh— "the Whore."

The religion of the *mairyas* was certainly one based on life and the preservation and continuation of life and the glories of the individual soul. As the "prophet" Zoroaster saw them, these bands must have seemed the very incarnations of the evil minions of Ahriman. They wore black leather (although they fought naked from the waist up), bore black weapons and flew a black flag emblazoned with silver dragons. Their hair was long and they wore it in braids. In their initiation rites they were known, like members of other Indo-European warrior bands, to don the skins of wolves— thereby transforming themselves into the likeness of wolves. Also they made use of a magical fury called *aeshma.*(72)

This *aeshma* is doubly interesting to us because on the one hand it is a close parallel to the magical fury or inspiration (*wod-*) attained by the Germanic warrior/magicians under the leadership of their god *Wôd-an-az* (Woden/Odin), while the word *aeshma* also found its way into the Judeo-Christian demonic lore in the form of Aeshma-daeva (the god/demon of fury). The Iranian form Aeshmadaeva eventually became Asmodeus.

Zoroaster vilified the religious culture of the warrior societies, and many of his reforms seem aimed at correcting what he saw as excesses in their practices and in their violent natures. Essentially his reforms consisted of a replacement of most (if not all) of the gods (*daevas*) of the traditional Iranian pantheon with hierarchies of personifications of largely abstract entities or principles (*yazatas*)

In Zoroaster's theology there is one god who is absolutely wise and purely good, but not all-powerful. He is called Ahura Mazda ("Wise Lord"). He created through Thought a hierarchy of all-seeing spirits. In fact he created a whole good universe, called *menok.* It is said that Ahura Mazda chose the Good of his own free will.(73) This clearly implies that somehow beyond the gods there is a system of morality to which they themselves are subject. Among the creatures Ahura Mazda engenders are the twins Spenta Mainyu (Beneficent Mind) and Angra Mainyu (Destroying Mind). Angra Mainyu, exercising his own free will, for the first time chose evil instead of good. The very existence of Angra

Mainyu in effect limited the good of Ahura Mazda. Angra Mainyu then began to plan an attack on the good creation of Ahura Mazda (who in some accounts is virtually identified with Spenta Mainyu). But Ahura Mazda with his all-seeing wisdom sees Angra Mainyu's plan and in defence of his pre-existing spiritual universe (*menok*), he created from its pattern a material universe (*getik*). This material universe is created by Ahura Mazda as a weapon or shield against Angra Mainyu. The later systems of Gnosis which contrived to make the material universe the creation of the "evil god" would have been highly heretical to Zoroaster himself.

In some accounts it is said that Angra Mainyu began a counter creation in which he made monsters (such as wolves and spiders) for each beautiful creature Ahura Mazda had fashioned (such as dogs and eagles). Other accounts have it that Angra Mainyu began to possess or indwell in the good creations of Ahura Mazda— corrupting them.

But what has Angra Mainyu — known as Ahriman in later sources — really done but give Ahura Mazda the licence he needs to extend his power limitlessly while only acting morally in defence of his good creation? Here it is seen that Angra Mainyu actually — unconsciously and involuntarily — collaborates in Ahura Mazda's plans of perfection. So Angra Mainyu can be seen as an example of "evil" which promotes the cause of good— just as Goethe's Mephistopheles says of himself:

> *Ich bin ein Teil von jener Kraft,*
> *die stets das Bose will und stets das Gute schafft.*
> I am a part of that force that would
> always desire the evil, yet always work the good.
>
> (J. W. von Goethe, *Faust* I, Scene 5)

In the orthodox Zoroastrian system, mankind is exhorted — in imitation of Ahura Mazda — to choose the good always as a matter of free will. In so doing the evil machinations of Ahriman will be thwarted. Mankind is seen as the chief battle gronnd between good and evil— and mankind is seen as the fulcrum on which the fate of the world is balanced.

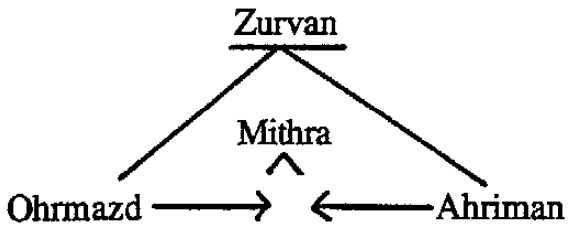
The Zoroastrians were by no means immediately successful in their efforts to reform the Iranian religion and their system does not appear to become the official religion of the court of the Shah, Darius, until around 522 BCE— approximately a millennium after the death of Zoroaster himself.(74)

Zoroaster lived and his system flourished most in eastern Iran (on the eastern side of the Zagros mountains)— but the various Iranian Empires (from around 800 BCE) and the realm of Iranian cultural influence spread through Mesopotamia into Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). In the western part of the Persian Empire the cult of the *magûs* (sing. *magû*, priest) remained strong and resisted Zoroastrian influence. *Magu* is the ultimate source of the term "magician." It was also Latinized as the singular *magus* (pl. *magi*) and used to designate highly initiated (and ostensibly wise) practitioners of sorcery. As time went on, however, the cult of the *magûs* became progressively more influenced by Zoroastrian ideas until they eventually came to be *identified* (by outsiders) as Zoroastrian priests.

In fact pre-Zoroastrian religious systems continued to flourish throughout this time both inside and outside the Persian empire— and some say they still persist. In any event, the native Iranian beliefs — forms of *daeva*-worship — are certainly known to have still existed in the mountainous region of Sogdia at the time of the Islamic conquest which took from 636 to 800 CE to complete.

The principal pre-Zoroastrian systems, which nevertheless began to include Zoroastrian elements over time (just as Zoroastrianism incorporated pre-Zoroastrian elements), were Zurvanism and Mithraism.

Zurvan is an Iranian deity embodying infinite time and destiny. According to the Zurvanites, Zurvan is the "father" of both Ohrmazd and Ahriman. This conception is apparently extremely ancient, perhaps even pre-dating Zoroaster's system.(75) It is probably in the system of Zurvanism that the idea of the *moral dualism* preached in Zoroaster's theology finds expression in a dualism expressed between spirit (as a manifestation of good) and matter (as a manifestation of evil). It can not be over emphasized that the spirit = good/matter = evil ideology is *not* Zoroastrian. It is an extreme heresy in orthodox Zoroastrianism to believe such a thing— although it does seem to be an Iranian idea. In Zurvanism Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd) is reduced to a creature of Zurvan— which again is heretical for orthodox Zoroastrians.



In the Zurvanite system, the god Mithra (Vedic Mitra) is seen as a mediator between Ohrmazd and Ahriman. In Mithra we see another persistent manifestation of the pre-Zoroastrian religion throughout the history of Iranian religion and religious systems derived from Iranian thought. The Mithraic cult was strong for a long time among the *magûs* of the western Persian Empire— especially around the Black Sea. It is clearly a non-Zoroastrian warrior oriented mystery cult.(76) A close study of Mithraism reveals that it is a sophisticated system developed from the religion of the warrior bands (*haenas*) of early Iranian culture. This is often eclectically mixed with elements from religions and mystery cults with which the Mithraists came into contact. When the Romans came into contact with this cult (after the middle of the 1st century CE) it spread among soldiers throughout the Roman Empire.

Mithraism, as opposed to other common forms of Iranian religion, is remarkably free of dualistic thinking. It seems to be a highly developed survival of the old Iranian warrior cult. Mithras, who in some respects resembled another culture hero also born on 25 December, achieved salvation through the sacrifice of a bull. Eventually this bull-sacrifice cult lost out to the human-sacrifice cult of Christianity.

From the standpoint of orthodox Zoroastrian religion, both Zurvanism and Mithraism represent heretical, "evil" paths of darkness. Zurvanism both because it sees Ohrmazd as a subordinate to Zurvan and Ahriman as the complete equal of Ohrmazd, and because it reduces the material universe to a creation of the evil god. Mithraism is heretical and evil because in it one of the old gods (*daevas*), Mithras, is worshipped. What is more, he is worshipped at *night* (which in itself constitutes an evil act of "devil worship" among orthodox Zoroastrians) and he is a warrior god who sacrifices a cosmic bull to create the world— which is reminiscent of the sacrificial cult of the old Iranian *haenas*. The followers of Mithras take part in that sacrifice, becoming themselves creators.

Zoroastrianism and the Iranian religious systems in general have exerted tremendous, sometimes formative, influences on religious and magical traditions around them. These systems originated such important historical religious ideas as the strict dualism between the forces of good and the forces of evil, the idea of the coming of a world savior (Saoshyant) at the end of a linear stretch of time, the notion of all souls being judged— the good going to Paradise (from the Iranian word *pairi-daeza*, "a walled in garden or park"). the wicked to a realm of punishment, and the idea of the resurrection (or reconstruction and reanimation) of the physical bodies of the dead in a renewed world. In fact two of the most important Judeo-Christian myths are Iranian in origin: Certain aspects of Eden (Gen. 1-2) and the nativity of Jesus (Mat. 2:1-12).

The symbolic complex of the first man and woman (together with a malevolent female figure) and the tree of Paradise in conjunction with a serpent definitely seems to originate in Judaism (and hence Christianity) from Iranian sources.(77) While these symbols have been present in the near east for millennia, it is most likely that they entered into Hebrew mythology following the time of the Jewish liberation from Babylon in 539 BCE. After that time, until the conquest of Alexander in 332 BCE, Israel was part of the Persian Empire.

More obviously of Iranian — and specifically "magian" or Mithraic origin — is the myth of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. In the Iranian (Mithric) lore it was believed that the future Redeemer-King of the world would be born in a cave and that this would be signalled by a "star or column of light" shining above the cave. This explains why the three *magoi (magûs)* are said to have visited the Christ child in the accounts given in the Gospel of Matthew.(78)

Often the Yezidis, another Iranian people, are thought to be related to left-hand path ideas. It is just as likely as not that the original impetus and essence of that sect is Iranian (the Yezidis are Kurds, an Iranian people). Also, the apparent fact that they give some sort of honor to the god normally associated with evil, and that he is already been, or will be, forgiven by god, is consistent with heterodox Iranian beliefs.(79) I treat the Yezidis in more detail in chapter 4.

In the final analysis it seems virtually impossible to classify any of the systems of Iranian thought as either right-hand path or left-hand path according to the criteria set out in this study. This is because although there is usually a strong polarity between good and evil in these systems, the good is not a matter of following the Law of God, or in seeking self-annihilation either literally or as a by-product of "doing God's will," but rather it is doing or choosing the Good which the god himself must also seek to choose. The Good seems to be an objective construct comparable to the Platonic *agathôn*. The individualities of the good ones are not annihilated— but preserved and even resurrected in physical reality.

Because the "east" has historically been able to preserve more or less intact the full range of religious "paths" envisioned and practiced by humanity, and because sages and magicians have consciously worked these methods out in an atmosphere of relative philosophical toleration, the methods and vocabulary of *both* paths seem more precise there. Much of the dichotomy between the methods and aims we have identified as right-hand path and left-hand path for this study was originally developed in an eastern (Indo-Iranian) context. What we are immediately struck with when we look to the oldest foundations of European culture is the existence of the range of paths relatively free of the dichotomizing tendencies which lead to the left-hand path/right-hand path labels.

Notes For Chapter 2

(1) See J. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

(2) For a critical study of Dumezil's works and ideas, see C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.)

(3) Francis M. Cornford, trans. and ed. *The Republic of Plato*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 119-129.

(4) See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Vintage, 1967 [1972]).

(5) For a convenient introduction to the *Rig Veda*, see Wendy Donniger O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1981.

(6) Julius Evola, *The Yoga of Power: Tantra, Shakti, and the Secret Way*. trans. Guido Stucco. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1992), p. 66.

(7) For a discussion of tantric science, see Mookojee and Khana, *The Tantric Way* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), pp. 93-125.

(8) J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1920), pp. 265ff.

(9) Evola, *The Yoga of Power*, p. 30.

(10) See Joscelyn Godwin *Arktos: The Polar Myth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, 1993), p. 33, and also Tilak, Bal Gangadhar. *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. Poona: The Kesari, 1903.

(11) Alain Danielou, *The Myths and Gods of India* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1985), p. 382.

(12) Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 2nd ed.), p. 142.

(13) Sastri, S. Subrahmanya and T.R. Srinivasa Ayyangar, eds. *Jivanmuktiviveka* (Liberation in Life) of Vidyaranya (Adyar: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1978.

(14) Louis Renou, ed., *Hinduism* New York: George Braziller, 1961), p. 40.

(15) Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 142.

(16) Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 128.

(17) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 66.

(18) One of the most coherent discussions of the process of personal transformation within tantrism is found in chapter 6 of Arthur Avalon's *Shakti and Shakta*. (New York: Dover, [1959]), pp. 136-187.

(19) N. N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion* (New Dehli: Manohar, 1982), p. 341.

(20) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 341.

(21) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 317.

(22) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 318.

(23) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, pp. 54-55.

(24) Robert E. Svaboda, *Aghora II: Kundalini* (Albuquerque, NM: Brotherhood of Life, 1993), p. 85.

(25) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 55.

(26) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 55.

(27) Avalon, Arthur (= John Woodroffe), *Shakti and Shakta*. (New York: Dover, [1959]), p. 164 and Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 55.

(28) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, pp. 67-68.

(29) Danielou, *Myths and Gods of India*, p. 258.

(30) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 108.

(31) Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 228-229.

(32) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 68.

(33) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 66.

(34) Margaret and James Stutley, *Harper's Dictionary of Hinduism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 67; 321.

(35) Francis King, *Tantra for Westerners* (New York: Destiny, 1986), p. 95.

(36) Danielon, *Myths and Gods of India*, p. 383.

(37) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 27.

(38) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 192.

(39) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 198.

(40) In the Vedantic school the only way to liberation is through *jnana*. Bondage is due to *avidya* (non-knowing) and involvement with the phenomenal universe is due to *avidya* alone. (cf. S.K. Ramachandra Rao *Jivanmukti in Advaita*. Gandhinagar, Bangalore: Prakashana, 1978, p. 31.

(41) Renon, *Hinduism*, p. 35.

(42) Mookojee and Khana, pp. 28-29.

(43) Danielou, *Myths and Gods of India*, p. 382.

(44) Evola, *Yoga of Power*, pp. 93-100.

(45) Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon, 1969, p. 46ff.

(46) Danielou, *Myths and Gods of India*, pp. 382-83.

(47) Danielou, *Myths and Gods of India*, p. 212.

(48) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 56.

(49) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 56.

(50) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 21.

(51) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 24.

(52) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 109.

(53) Bhattacharyya, *History*, p. 110.

(54) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 69.

(55) Danielou, *Myths and Gods of India*, p. 212.

(56) Benjamin Walker, *Tantrism* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press, 1982), p. 49ff.

(57) Walker, *Tantrism*, pp. 64-66.

(58) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 89-91.

(59) Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 239.

(60) Walker, *Tantrism*, p. 52.

(61) Walker, *Tantrism*, p. 50ff; King, *Tantra*, p. 92.

(62) Benjamin Walker, *Gnosticism: Its History and Influence*. (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press, 1983), p. 117.

(63) King, *Tantra*, p. 92.

(64) Svaboda, *Aghora II*, p. 85; 205ff.

(65) Edward Conze, *Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), pp. 191-192.

(66) W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958, 2nd ed.), p. 138.

(67) King, *Tantra*, p. 92.

(68) *Republic*, pp. 227-235.

(69) Walker, *Gnosticism*, pp. 163-165.

(70) Mircea Eliade, *History of Religious Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), vol I, pp. 302-305.

(71) Eliade, *History of Religious Ideas* (1982), vol. II, pp. 309ff.

(72) Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), pp. 23-26

(73) Eliade *History of Religious Ideas* (1978), vol. I, pp. 309ff.

(74) Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 54ff.

(75) Eliade, *History of Religious Ideas* (1982), vol. II, pp. 309ff.

(76) A basic studies of Mithraism is offered by Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithras* (New York: Dover, 1956).

(77) Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian, 1963), pp. 290-291.

(78) Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 50-55.

(79) Insightful studies of the Yezidis have recently been offered by John S. Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival* (London: KPI, 1987) and Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Iblis, the Black Light" *Gnosis* 14 (Winter: 1990), pp. 2-47.

Chapter 3
Roots of the Western Tradition

Roots of the Western Left-Hand Path

With varying degrees of accuracy in European culture the phrase left-hand path has come to mean Satanism. This is both accurate and inaccurate. It is accurate insofar as the Judeo-Christian religious system — which coined the name "Satan" (from Hebrew s tn, opponent; adversary) — saw in its conception of evil many traits and characteristics of left-hand path philosophy and religion. So when left-hand path practitioners looked at the orthodox Judeo-Christian systems, they would might feel a high degree of sympathy with and for the Devil. This seems to have happened with many Gnostic sects.

The equation of the western left-hand path with Satanism is inaccurate insofar as the practice of the left-hand path predates the imposition of the Judeo-Christian ideology in Europe. There was *and is* the practice of the left-hand philosophy in a purely pagan or heathen (i.e., pre-Christian) religious context, which does not *need* to refer to Satan or Lucifer to be intelligible. The left-hand path would have existed in Europe without the advent of Christianity (as it does and did in India). But when Christianity did arrive, it labeled not only the indigenous left-hand path practices of the heathens as diabolical, but the right-hand path ones as well. It was, however, only the left-hand path practitioners who were insightful and perhaps courageous enough to identify in some degree their ways with those of the adversary of the right-hand path Christians.

The Pagan Roots in Europe

The great Indo-European cultural and linguistic migrations beginning around 4000 BCE graphically shows the true root of "western" culture. The cultural roots of the peoples now speaking Celtic, Italic, Germanic, Slavic, or Hellenic (Greek) languages is probably to be found somewhere to the northeast of the Black Sea.(1) The national mythologies and religious systems of philosophy of these groups are closely related due to their common ultimate origin. What these migration routes also show, however, is the equally common origin shared between this western branch of the family and an eastern branch which is the Indo-Iranian tradition discussed in Part I.

Just as the left-hand path philosophy developed in the east, we could equally expect to find one developed in the west. In the west in fact, the basics of the left-hand path philosophy seem to have had virtual equal footing with right-hand path philosophies in the west— and seem to have dominated in the northern parts of Europe.

An important thing to remember about the Indo-European cosmology is that it postulates a divine order— which partakes of a higher or more permanent level of reality— that is reflected in the human order. The human soul, the *psyche*, is a gift of the gods and the social orderings are reflections of the orderings of the various pantheons of gods. This primal understanding was developed into an articulated *philosophy* by Plato in the "west" — just as it had been by the school of Indian sages responsible for the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* in the "east."

History is full of tragedies and apparent tragedies. At least on one level, one of these tragedies was the slow erosion and ultimate destruction of the *established* forms of European religious systems through the incursion of an "exotic eastern religion" we now call Christianity. The

ecclesiastical institutions, or churches, supposedly based on the teachings of an executed holy man named Jesus, slowly and over a period of nearly 1300 years, disestablished the indigenous religious and philosophical traditions of the European nations and replaced them with the establishment of an international institution. This institution was characterized by an obsession for dogmatic unanimity on matters of "spiritual" teachings.

A map of the ideological campaigns of the Church would show a spread of Christianity from cities in the Mediterranean region northward and outward into the countryside. Of course, the church was nowhere able to impose itself absolutely. To be successful it had to compromise at every step along the way. But it was willing to do so in exchange for its ultimate prize— *universal establishment.*

Everywhere the church advanced, one of its standard practices was to turn the native gods into devils and to destroy the old temples and sacred groves and in their places build churches. We will return to the Christianization process in chapter 4, but for right now it is important to realize that: 1) the oldest roots of European and Indo-Iranian culture are identical (Indo-European), 2) the present established religious culture in Europe has its roots on foreign soil (the Middle East), and 3) the exotic Christian tree was only able to disestablish the native tree in a partial, external way.

So in very many ways what we call the "western tradition" is really largely *southern* and non-Indo-European in origin, while what is commonly referred to as the "eastern tradition" really has roots in common with actual European culture.

However, as the "western tradition" stands now, it is indeed a synthesis (albeit an awkward and uncomfortable one) of actual European and southern traditions derived from the Nilo-Mesopotamian (Egyptian and Mesopotamian) magical cultures. Therefore we must also examine the possible presence of the left-hand path philosophy in those regions as one of the possible roots of the modern left-hand path.

The Hellenic Left-Hand Path

In the history of the world perhaps no other single culture has been more influential over a wider expanse of time and space than the Hellenic. Moving down from the north, Hellenic, or Greek, tribes invaded and established themselves throughout the southern Balkan and Italic peninsulas and throughout the islands of the eastern Mediterranean Sea from about 1600 to 1100 BCE. The indigenous — non-Indo-European — culture which they overcame was an unusually vibrant and powerful one— having its apparent epicenter on the island of Crete. The Greek culture of the Homeric Age (850-750 BCE) is largely a true synthesis of Hellenic (Indo-European) and Minoan (Old European) cultures. *Synthesis* along with a sense of *harmony* and *moderation* are the major Hellenic cultural traits.

Because the Hellenic culture was so much a sea-going and mercantile one, it made deep-level contacts with the cultures of Egypt and other cultures of the eastern Mediterranean— for example, that of the Phoenicians. But whatever the cultural elements the Greeks might have adopted or borrowed from other cultures— such as writing (from the Phoenicians) or building in stone (from the Minoans) — the one aspect which remained thoroughly Greek — and Indo-European — was their *idealism.* Whether we see it in India or Ireland, in Rome or Greece, the Indo-European cosmology — or understanding of the world-order — hinges on the theory that this world is a material reflection of another, more real one — for example that of the gods and goddesses — beyond whom looms a yet more real world of abstract principles. This is expressed in the intrinsic linguistic dichotomy between *physis* (nature) and *psychê* (soul).

This idealism (ultimately codified by the philosopher Plato) coupled with the Greek language and writing system (one so simple and convenient even sailors and merchants could master it) allowed Hellenic culture to transform most cultures with which it had any long-standing contact.

— Prometheus and Pandora — The Origins of Evil and its Transformative Effects on Humanity

The exact age of the myth of Prometheus (whose name means "the one with foreknowledge") is unknown. However, the idea of a transpersonal — or semi-divine — figure who is responsible for providing humanity with the spiritual faculty by which humans may *know* things seems to be a common Indo-European one. Such a figure would normally be considered a benefactor of humanity— in fact its true *creator* (in a spiritual sense). One 4th century source (Pausanias 10.4.4) even says Prometheus fashioned men from clay (see Eliade *HRI*, I, p. 255). This would seem to be a myth borrowed from the Middle East identifying Prometheus with Jehovah. Also, perhaps under the influence of the Middle Eastern notions concerning the "evil" of knowledge, the Greeks at one point turned this figure into a paradigm of the origin of human misery.

Hesiod's *Theogony* (ca 700 BCE) is the oldest written reference to the myth of Prometheus. Hesiod portrays Prometheus as a titanic (pre-Olympian) entity who engenders a division between the gods and humanity— who had until that time lived in harmony together. Gods and men wished to part on good terms, so Prometheus institutes the first sacrifice of an ox to seal their pact of separation and independence. This rite is said to have occurred at a place called Mekone. After the slaying of the ox, Prometheus divides it into two portions: one of bone and one of flesh and entrails. The bones he covers with fat so that the smoke rising from them attracts the attention of Zeus, supreme deity of the Olympians. The meat is disguised by the fat of the ox. A choice is offered to the Olympian— and he chooses the fat-covered bones. When Zeus discovers the truth, he becomes angry at Prometheus and mankind and withdraws the divine fire which had presumably been one of those things previously shared by gods and humans.

This division of the sacrificial animal between edible parts, which are consumed by humans, and generally inedible parts, which are presumed to be the gods' share, is common Indo-European practice and the myth is on one level a later attempt to "explain" this practice.

Again according to Hesiod, Prometheus responded to this by stealing the divine fire from Olympus. He carries it back to the world of men in a hollow fennel stalk. And once more Zeus is moved to punish mankind and Prometheus. This time Prometheus is pinned to a great rock— where an eagle comes daily to eat of his liver. To punish humanity Zeus sends them a woman— Pandora ("All-Suffering")— out of whose box all the woes of mankind spring.

Hesiod's portrayal of Prometheus is avowedly negative— although the primitive, pre-Hesiodic, roots of the myth may have not been so. After all, it is a myth of the self-determined and independent actions of our species— a myth of its "coming of age." Such transformative myths always seem to involve rebellion against authority. Zeus himself had not merely disobeyed his father (Kronos)— he killed him and created a new divine order through his rebellion. By taking a negative attitude toward Prometheus' actions, Hesiod shows himself to be one who longed for the "good old days" before humanity had individuated or differentiated itself from its divine ancestry. Belief in a divine ancestry is also a common Indo-European tradition.

That the negative attitude toward Prometheus was not universal is shown by the later version of the myth presented by the Attic tragedian Aeschylus (525-456 BCE). Aeschylus shows Prometheus as a tragic hero and savior of mankind.

Aeschylus apparently originally wrote three tragedies— a Promethean trilogy — but only the first of these *Prometheus Bound*, survives. In this version of the myth Zeus simply refuses to give humanity the divine fire— while at the same time he complains that humanity is wretched and deficient. Zeus plans to destroy humanity and create a new race. Prometheus protests man's destruction, and tells Zeus that what humanity needs to fulfill its potential is the divine fire. Zeus refuses to relinquish it, so Prometheus steals the fire from Olympus and is punished for it in the same way as described by Hesiod. Where Hesiod had emphasized the fall of humanity from a "Golden Age" in which it was undifferentiated from the family of the gods, Aeschylus stresses a "myth of progress" in which the species begins to evolve faculties of consciousness after its contact with the gift of the divine fire.

Although the text of Aeschylus' final tragedy is lost, we know from accounts that in it Zeus releases and forgives Prometheus. He does this basically because the prediction of "the One with Foreknowledge" concerning the potential of humanity in possession of the gift of the divine flame turned ont to be right— although the fact that Themis, the mother of Prometheus, has given him the secret of the future fall of Zeus also plays a role.

Historically this reconciliation of Zeus and Prometheus may have been spurred by the fact that in the time of Aeschylus — at the end of the Hellenic Age — there was an annual festival in Athens dedicated to Prometheus. Although this began as a festival mainly patronized by craftsmen, by the time of Aeschylus it was also popular with intellectuals. The cult of this "god of evil" had become a widespread phenomenon.(2) It may well be that the story of the forgiveness of Zeus was created more to promote Zeus as a god of forgiveness and wisdom than to rehabilitate the reputation of Prometheus. Zeus is even said to have forgiven his father, Kronos, and made him king of Elysium.

The Myth of Prometheus and the Left-Hand Path

In the history of the kind of thought we are calling left-hand path in the west, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the myth of Prometheus. In it we have perhaps the oldest western representation of the myth of the Bringer of the Gift of Divine Light or Fire *portrayed as a villain* in the history of humanity. The fact that he is eventually revaluated as a hero is also a significant western phenomenon we will see repeatedly.

It is curious to note that the American pioneer of modern Satanism, Anton LaVey, much admires the work of the sociologist Orrin Klapp and his book *Heroes, Villains and Fools* which analyzes the ways in which modern figures are transformed from among those categories of public perception.

In the Indo-European metalanguage of myth, the patterns of the right-hand path and left-hand path ideologies — although they openly vie with one another and compete for validation — are somehow reconciled and learn to co-exist. This is in marked contrast with the fanatical approaches of right-hand path systems of middle eastern — or southern — origin in which their "Satans" are never forgiven or reevaluated.

The myth of Prometheus is one which shows the spiritual or intellectual tutelage of a figure who provides humanity with its divine aspect — its intellect — and who is as such the true father of its spirit. Prometheus promotes the individuation of mankind from the gods and sets it as a species on its heroic quest to develop its own sense of divine power. As long as humanity was closely linked to the gods, it could not evolve in accordance with its own mysterious quest. Prometheus forced humanity out of its Olympian nest— and made it so that the species would have to fly or destroy itself. However, he also saw to it that the species was provided with *the one thing* that was absolutely necessary to flight— the divine fire of the gods. The myth clearly places the unbound exercise of the intellect — the divine faculty of consciousness — in the cultural mainstream of at least an aristocracy of intellectual merit.

Promethean mythology has been tremendously influential over the course of European cultural history. Since Aeschylus, the figure of the light-bearer was seen at least to some extent as a tragic hero. The myth itself probably did much to shape the lives of martyred philosophers such as Socrates and perhaps Jesus of "Nazareth" — or at least the literary representations of them. Beyond this it is interesting to note that Mary Shelly subtitled her Romantic manifesto novel, *Frankenstein*, "the modern Prometheus"— which implies a complex metaphor (and even the genesis of a neo-mythology) worthy of study in its own right.

The Greek Mysteries and the Left-Hand Path

The whole subject of the various mystery systems — their origius, interrelationships, and especially the exact nature of what they taught and how they taught it — remains, well, *mysterious*.(3) The initiatory function of the concept "mystery" (Gk. *mysterion*) is powerful and pervasive in many systems of religion, magic, and initiation— but its full significance is yet to be

discovered.(4) Also exactly what aspects of the Mysteries can be designated as right-hand path or left-hand path remain obscure, but I hope to be able to shed some light on this question here.

As Nietzsche was to emphasize centuries later, there are essentially two philosophical approaches are present in Hellenic (and by inference Indo-European) culture: the Dionysian and Apollonian. Of course, there tends to be the human, all-too-human urge to equate one with good and the other with evil, but this is always counterproductive. In fact, either philosophical approach to enlightenment can be used for right-hand or left-hand path spiritual aims— and a synthesis of both is perhaps the ideal.

The Dionysian approach is that of the *orgia* (orgy) by which human consciousness is united with that of the divine by means of a lowering of peripheral consciousness to a level where the divine — or "the other" — subsumes it. Dionysian spiritual technology makes use of rhythms (drumming, dancing, etc.) drugs (e.g. wine), and perhaps sex to lower the normal threshold of consciousness by overloading the physical senses which allows a union with the divine to occur.

The Apollonian approach is that of *katharsis* (purification) by which the consciousness cleanses and distances itself (through intellectual discipline and physical austerities) of impurities to such extent that consciousness is eventually raised to the level of divinity. Apollonian spiritual technology makes use of reason and physical austerities (such as dietary restrictions, vegetarianism, etc.) to raise the threshold of consciousness by suppressing the physical senses which allows the psyche to gain union with the divine.

Orphism or the Orphic Mysteries (so-called after the myth of Orpheus) make use of both technologies— though the Apollonian seems to predominate. Both the Orphic and Pythagorean mystery schools — which may share a common origin — practice vegetarianism. Whatever the historical origins of this practice, it is mythically traced back to that first animal sacrifice held by Prometheus at Mekone. Social participation was virtually mandatory in such sacrifices. In European practice such sacrifices was a matter of ritually slaughtering an animal and sharing the parts of the animal with the gods— the hard or inedible parts going to the god(s) and the edible portions being consumed by the faithful as an act of communion with the god(s). Animals were ceremonially slaughtered with a minimum of pain and fear to the animal as it was thought to embody a divine essence. The Orphics and Pythagoreans saw the institution of the eating of flesh as a sign of the presence of the "Titanic" (i.e. base or sub-divine) element in humanity and carnivorous practice as a perpetuation of that Titanic element. Their rejection of meat-eating also had the socio-religious effect of separating them from the mainstream of Hellenic society. They rejected the established practices of religion and society of their day.(5)

The over all process of initiation in these mysteries— which presupposed that humans were now a mixture of a Titanic nature and a divine nature — involved purifications (*katharmoi*), followed by initiation rites (*teletai*), and the constant leading of an "Orphic life." Through these methods one could eliminate the Titanic element and become *bakkhos* — "separated out" and in a "divine, Dionysiac condition."(6)

This theme of "separation" from the conventional social and natural order of the cosmos is one common to the left-hand path. Eliade concludes that the Orphic is "able to free himself from the 'demonic' element manifest in all profane existence (ignorance, flesh, diet, etc.)" and that the final goal is "the separation of the 'Orphic' from his fellow men and in the last analysis, the final separation of the soul from the cosmos."(7) This same theme will also be emphasized in the Setian philosophy of Michael Aquino in the Temple of Set.

In the Orphic or Mystery traditions of the Greeks there are also some original contributions to the mythology of the right-hand *versus* the left-hand *paths*. In his *Republic* Plato, apparently drawing on mystery traditions, says that the dead follow two paths to judgment: the just "to the right upwards through the sky ... the unjust were condemned to the downward road to the left..."(8) This is no literary or heuristic invention by the philosopher, as shown by archaeological evidence of tomb complexes in southern Italy and Crete which have plaques with inscriptions indicating that those who go on the "right hand road" go "toward the sacred fields and grove of Persephone."(9)

In this Orphic eschatology it seems that the good and just go the right hand road and are not reincarnated. They drink of the spring waters of *Mnemosyne* (Memory) and "reign with the other heroes." But the wicked must drink from the spring called *Lethe* (Forgetfulness) and so loose all memory of the otherworld and are reincarnated in this world as "punishment."10)

In other words, the point of Orphic initiation was for the initiate to become a god— or god-like. In the underworld the Orphic initiate is told: "O fortunate, o happy one! Thou has become a god, having been a man."(11)

The attitudes toward what a desirable postmortem existence would be seem to have shifted over time. In the early historical phase it seems that the virtuous and good were rewarded with rebirth after rebirth in the world— which was seen as a highly desirable place to be. This amounted to an earthly immortality in ever rejuvenated bodies. Eventually these virtuous humans would be called by duty to the level of the immortal gods. However, the wicked in this early stage of such beliefs were "punished" with a permanent death, or non-existence. Later, there seems to have been a shift in some cultures' (for example those of Greece and India) attitudes toward life in this world. In this phase it is believed that the wicked are *punished* with cycles of rebirth in this world and the virtuous are rewarded with a permanent existence among the gods and heroes.

Pythagoras and the Left-Hand Path

The doctrines of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (about 582-507 BCE) are said to be drawn from a wide variety of sources— Egypt, Chaldea (Babylon), as well as Hyperborea (the extreme north).(12) However, virtually all of the major doctrines ascribed to Pythagoras can be derived from native Hellenic or Indo-European analogs. Although Pythagoras may have indeed travelled and learned in the far flung centers of esoteric knowledge— it seems most likely that he synthesized what he learned according to a uniquely Hellenic methodology. Most of the basic Pythagorean assumptions about the origin and destiny of the human soul are accepted from the Orphic mysteries. Pythagoras and his followers transformed the methodology of the process of initiation from an external or experiential one to an internal or *philosophical* one. Plato would further refine this Hellenic philosophical tradition.

Pythagoras made philosophy into a "whole science"— or a holistic understanding of existence. He postulated that number is the "root" or principle (Gk. *archê*) of all things. But in his philosophy numbers were more *qualities* than quantities,(13) and therefore his apparently quantitative science was understood as a qualitative one. Mathematics revealed a hidden reality lying beyond the veil of appearances. To Pythagoras understanding the relationships and harmonies among numbers is tantamount to understanding the harmonies among things themselves.

The left-hand path characteristics of Pythagoreanism are more implicit than explicit. Pythagoras was primarily interested in discovering the bases of universal harmonies — of the ways all things fit together so beautifully — the "music of the spheres."

Plato and the Left-Hand Path

Although even Plato himself would never have claimed to have invented his system of philosophy, as he understood all true knowledge to be a matter of "recollection" (Gk. *anamnesis*) of the soul's inherent contents, he can be called the single greatest codifier and synthesizer of idealistic philosophy. Plato drew openly from a wide variety of philosophical sources — especially the Hellenic mysteries and Pythagoreanism — but he brought to those sources a clarity of objective purpose hitherto unseen.

The idealism of Plato should not be seen as the *beginning* of philosophy. It is a product of a millennia-long process of traditional speculation and intellectual inquiry begun at the dawn of Indo-European culture. Among all the languages of the world ouly the Indo-European and its derivatives has a true verb meaning "to be" in the sense of "*to exist.*" There were originally two verbs one meaning to be (in the sense of equivalence) — the chair is red — and one meaning "to be" (in the sense of existence): "To be or not to be, *that* is the question." In the ancient tongue these two verbs were **bheu-* (to be equivalent) and **se-* (to exist). This came down to us in Old English in the distinction between *beon* and *wesan* respectively. With the demise of the innate Indo-European

system of thought— precipitated by the influx of middle eastern thought forms promoted by the church — the two verbs collapsed together. This is the reason why the verb "to be" in modern English is so highly irregular— it is derived from a mixture of two different stems.

What does all this have to do with Plato or the left-hand path? This is not hard to realize: Plato's philosophy is an attempt to define **se-* and develop a system of training so that others may *know what exists*— what is real — about themselves and the cosmos.

Although *all* of Plato's works are essentially focused on the development of the soul, many have practical applications as well. As viewed from the modern perspective, the chief practical benefit of Plato's philosophy would be *political* not religious — as the Philosopher-Kings produced by the system would characteristically first exercise their knowledge in practical socio-political ways. In this aspect of his philosophy Plato harkens back to some very basic Indo-European assumptions— and structures. As in the ancient roots of his culture, the terrestrial socio-political arrangements were seen as reflections of such structures existing in the world of the gods— as laid out in the *Republic*, Plato wished to (re-)institute a political structure based on Indo-European principles:

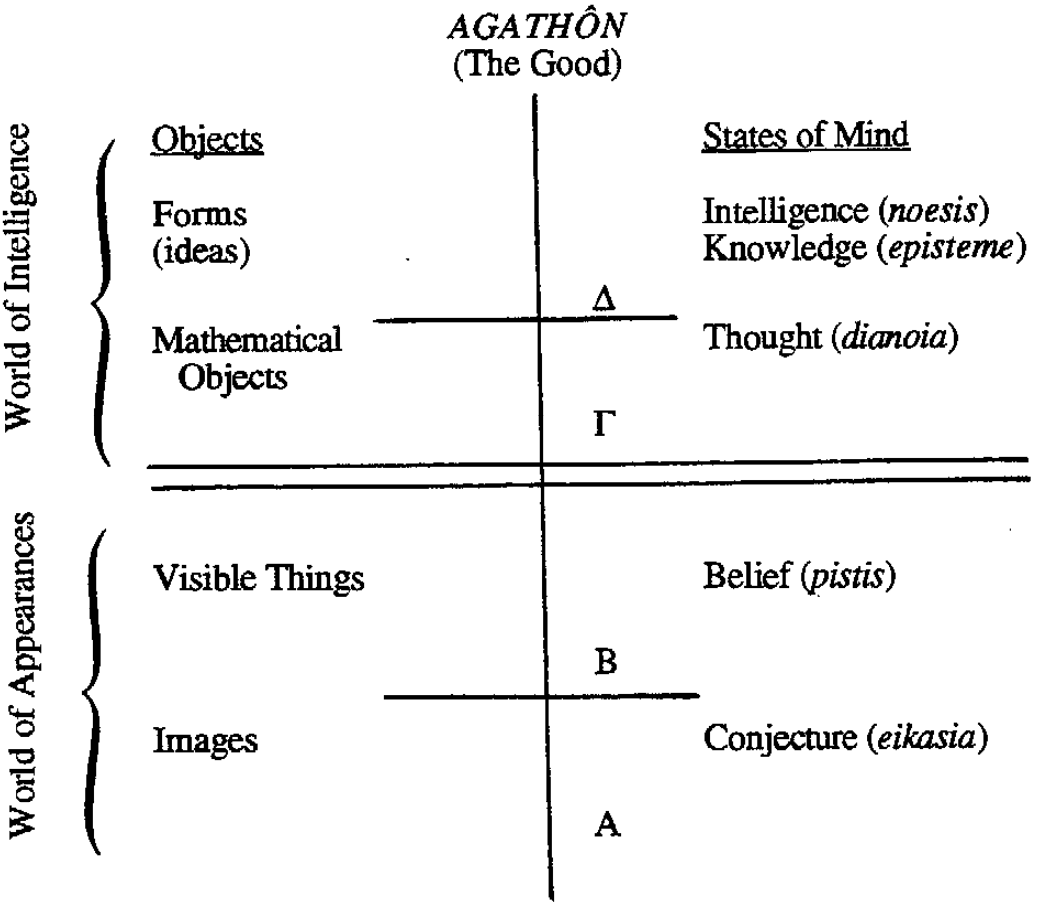
Function	**Platonic Terminology**
Ruler/Priests	Guardians (Philosopher-Kings)
Warriors	Auxiliaries
Craftsmen/Farmers	Artisans/Tradesmen

But in Plato's case it was not a wish merely to return to archaic models for their own sakes— but rather to realize and newly *understand* on a philosophical basis the principles and Forms on which these structures stood:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.(14)

The Academy, Plato's school near Athens, was to be a place where elite students could be trained as far as possible to hold right beliefs, think rationally, and ultimately to be able to intuit *rationally* and thus Understand the very Forms (Gk. *eide*) or principles which are the ultimate source of all things or phenomena in this world. To do this Plato devised a system of education based on a specific understanding of the soul (psychology) and theory of *how* that soul(or souls) can know its objects of knowledge. In many ways Plato's system is a philosophical refinement (and in some cases a simplification) of the traditional psychologies of the Indo-European peoples.(15) Figure 3.1 shows the Platonic scale of knowledge. In this scheme the student, or initiate, can be moved out of the realm of totally subjective *conjectures*— the objects of which are not real things but only shadows — into the realm of right *beliefs* based on established traditions and "common sense." This is the highest level of knowledge possible for the mass of humanity— and it is itself a great achievement. Beyond this, however, is a rational form of thought (*dianoia*) or logical thought based on mathematics. It is here that the influence of the Pythagorean school on the Platonic synthesis is most profound. Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of number could be approached here. But this dianetic is not the apex of knowledge. Perhaps the establishment "academics" (an unfortunate etymological development!) consider the quantification of knowledge most desirable— to "know" something becomes tantamount to "get the numbers on it." This is *an* aspect of *dianoia* but it is only a means to a greater end. This greater end has been virtually forgotten today in our "academies." Logical training is really a preparation for *noesis* in which the initiate will be able to Understand the *real* principles which exist in the realm of Forms. At this point the initiate is the equivalent of a Guardian or Philosopher-King (or Queen!)

The Platonic Scale of Knowledge



The system of Plato, as codified by the Neoplatonists (including Kabbalists, Sufis, etc.), underlies most current western systems of initiation and occult training, but because the source has often been intentionally obscured, the essential roots are sometimes difficult to discover. One might still inquire into the nature of the connection between Platonism and the left-hand path as we understand it philosophically. The ultimate root of this teaching lies in the mysteries. The simple answer is that Plato tanght a rationally based system for the attainment of a state of living "god-hood"— the Philosopher-King. This is the virtual equivalent of the *jivanmukti* state of attainment in the system of Indian philosophy.

Plato has arrived at a rational and *noetic* method of attainment of god-hood formerly attained in the mysteries by means of initiatory experiences and dramatic ordeals as well as purifications and physical austerities. The idealistic philosophy and *noetic* methods of Platonism would, in the history of western systems of initiation, be used as the underlying structure augmented and complemented by every sort of initiatory, philosophical, and magical technology in the ancient world. This synthesis would emerge in Neoplatonism (from the 2nd century CE onward) from which it would spread into many varied speculative initiatory schools, e.g. Kabbalism,(16) Sufism,(17) as well as Christian mysticism.(18)

Most, if not all, of these schools developed Platonic idealism in the direction of right-hand path mysticism. they aim not for the elevation of the individual intellect to the equivalence of divinity, or the Good (*agathôn*), but rather for the reabsorption or total regimentation of the individual in the substance of the One.

The pure Platonic aims have perhaps been revived — and placed in the context of a magical technology — most eloquently by Michael Aquino of the Temple of Set, who openly avows his initiatory debt to pure Platonism.

The Epicurean and Stoic Schools

Two philosophical streams of thought which have their sources in ancient (4th century BCE) Greece, but which are expressions of universal categories and ones that continue to influence life today are Stoicism and Epicureanism.

Epicureus (341-270 BCE) founded a school of thought largely based on the atomic physics of Democritos of a century earlier. Greek atomism declared that *everything* — including that which is called soul or spirit — is made up of *atoms*— particles so small they can be divided no further. The Epicurean holds that upon death the human soul, as well as the body, simply dissipates back into undifferentiated nature. Everything is material. However, the more rarified substance of the soul or intellect can help lead a person to the most perfect and happy state of being known as *ataraxia*— "unperturbableness" or "serenity." As the senses are the only access points through which pleasure or pain enter the mind or soul, to attain the state of ataraxia an Epicurean must control the quality of sensual experience. He or she avoids pain and maximizes pleasure. The *outer* life must be harmonized with the ideal quality of experience.(19)

The Stoic aims for ataraxia also, but does so in a very different way.

Stoicism is named for a school of philosophers who used to meet in the 4th century BCE at the *stoa* (portico) of the market at Athens. The Stoic claims a separate, non-natural existence for the soul. The soul or psyche may then control the quality and/or quantity of sensual stimulus and thus attain ataraxia not by controlling the outer stimuli but rather how the mind responds to such stimuli. The Stoic conditions his or her *inner* life to harmonize with an ideal state of being. Outer events become — or can be made to become — inconsequential. The Stoics hold that the soul existed before the body and that it will continue to exist after the body dies in a future state of "rewards and punishments." In this and other regards Stoicism was very much in harmony with other schools of the mystery traditions as well as Platonic philosophies. The Stoic typically needs a transpersonal ideal or principle to which loyalty and duty can be devoted in order for the philosophy to work.

Both of these philosophies were popular in Hellenistic Greece as well as Republican and Imperial Rome. Stoicism virtually became the "official philosophy" of Rome in the days of the Empire. The republican Cicero (106-43 BCE) and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) are two of its most well-known exponents.(20)

From our perspective, both of these ancient schools supply critical ideas for understanding the philosophy of the left-hand path. The Epicnreans provide a materialistic, carnal cosmology essential to the ideology of the Lesser Branch of the Left-hand Path. While Soticism develops further Platonic and Neo-Platonic idealism— even providing for the divinizing of the dead.

The Left-Hand Path in the North

The Germanic Left-Hand Path

While important roots of the left-hand path in the west were being developed in the Mediterranean region on a philosophical and anti-establishment basis, in the northern climes the roots of the left-hand path were found in the established cultural soil. Whereas the Indo-European god of law and order — Zeus-Jupiter — ruled in the south, in the north the god of magic and death— Odin/Woden held sway. This same original Indo-European divinity is called Lugh among the Irish and Lleu [pron. hligh] among the Welsh. Lugh/Lleu literally means "light"— and the common Welsh name Llewellyn means "light-bringer" (cf. Roman "Lucifer")!

The figure of Odin and his myths which hold our attention when we seek to find the dark side of the northern world. The name Odin means "the master of inspiration."(21) The Old Norse form is Ódinn. *Ódr* means "poetic inspiration," and is derived from Proto-Germanic *wôd-*, "rage; inspiration." This name is identical to Old English Woden. (It is a regular Old Norse rule to drop the initial /w-/ before certain vowels.) This is a decidedly "psychic" god in the sense that his name and function refer to essentially *soul*-related or psychological powers and faculties. He is often depicted as a dark god of intrigue and mysterious motivations.

Odin's essential importance in the shaping of the world and humanity is clear in Norse mythology. He, with his two brothers (actually hypostases of himself) Vili (Will) and Ve (Sacred One), perform the first sacrifice by killing their ancestral father, the giant Ymir. From the parts of

his body they shape the material cosmos. To gain universal wisdom, Odin gives (sacrifices) "himself to himself" that he might take up the runes— symbols of articulated universal knowledge.(22) These runes he shares with certain humans. Odin further pledges one of his eyes — which is sunk into Mimir's Well (the Well of Memory) that he may gain the special sight that drinking from the well gives.(23) He (along with his two other aspects) endows humankind with threefold spiritual qualities shared with the gods.(24) In the sharing of divine consciousness and the runes of wisdom Odin is very much like the figure of Prometheus in Hellenic mythology. The major difference is that in this act he is not transgressing against authoritarian rule of law.

Odin, in the guise of Rig (Ruler) also engenders the three classes of human beings— farmers, warriors, and rulers — on three different human women.(25) Thus he is responsible for not only the psychological structure of humanity but for its social structure as well— both of which are reflections of the divine order. For these reasons he is called the Alfadhir (All-Father). Odin, in the guise of Bölverkr (Worker of Evil), obtains for the gods and humans the poetic mead of inspiration through an act of oath-breaking deceit.

Even in ancient, pre-Christian times, Odin had a somewhat "sinister" or dangerous reputation. This is due to a whole complex of issues— but the most essential principle causing this reputation appears to be that he is immersed in things — universal order, mysteries, inspiration, death — that humans rarely understand and hence often fear and dread. Nevertheless Odin is acknowledged as the highest of the gods throughout the Germanic world— from Anglo-Saxon England to Germany and from Iceland to Sweden. Also adding to his sinister reputation is the fact that he committed the two greatest ethical crimes in pursuing his quest for power and knowledge. To create the world order, he killed a kinsman (a crime Odin shares with the Greco-Roman Zeus-Jupiter) and to rewin the poetic mead he breaks an oath. Those and other acts render Odin unreliable to the mass of humanity.

In the ancient Germanic tradition Odin is *both* the lord of light and the prince of darkness. He is the god of the elite nobles, and thus the god of royalty and rulership. He is the father of magic and the *power* to create and destroy. He is the god of poetry— of the art of effective linguistic formulations and codifications of *knowledge*. Both his magical power and "Gnostic" formulas are embodied in the runes ("mysteries"). Finally he is the lord of the dead, and rules over the phenomenon of death— and thus shows his mastery over all transformational processes. It might also be noted that the Celtic Lngh/Lleu shares almost all of these essential characteristics with his Germanic counterpart.(26)

The story of the conversion of the Germanic tribes to Christianity is pertinent to understanding subsequent left-hand path developments there and among the descendants of those tribes.

The earliest converts to Christianity among the Germanic peoples were some Gothic tribes who were part of the Arian school of theology. Arianism is named after a 4th century priest, Arius of Alexandria, who held that the Son was created by the Father and hence was not co-eternal with the Father. It is most likely, however, that the Goths developed their own form of uniquely Germanic Christianity— for all Germanic tribes that converted to the new faith did so with this "Gothic Church." The Goths kept their religion and their people separate from the Roman Church and the citizens of Rome. This type of national self-determination is, however, an anathema to the universalistic and imperialistic Roman (Catholic) mind. The Gothic form of Christianity is marked by a willinguess to make biblical texts available in the common language (the Gothic bishop Ulfilas translated the Bible around 350 CE), involvement of the people in the liturgy (the Roman Christians disdained the Gothic practice of rewriting traditional folk songs with religious lyrics), and a general belief that humans are born free of original sin, that they win salvation by their own virtuous efforts, and that Jesus was a man who had attained to a god-like status showing the way for others to follow. When these doctrines are compared to the orthodox Roman system outlined on page 00 below, the differences are obvious. In a free world — as the Germanic peoples had been used to — these cultural/religious differences would have been a normal and expected state of affairs, but the divine plan adhered to by the Roman Catholic (= universal) Church called for "one God, one Church, one Pope!"

The historical break came for universalism when the Frankish ("French") king Chlodwig or Clovis (Ludwig/Louis) converted to Roman Christianity in 496 CE. He did so in order to get foreign military aid from Rome in his attempt to conquer southern France, then dominated by the Arian Visigoths. From that time onward the Frankish king was the chief military agent for the Pope. Eventually the Goths were eradicated and apparently their faith with them— although some "secret assemblies still claim to carry on their traditions.

The story of the conversion of Germany is generally a bloody one. Most of the conversions were carried out upon threat of death after military conqnest by Frankish kings working as agents for the Roman Pope.

Around 597 CE an early Roman mission was sent to England which at the time was made up of a confederation of seven independent kingdoms. The king of Kent, Æthelbert, under the influence of his wife, converted to Roman Christianity and began a long program of military and ideological warfare was begun (oftentimes halfheartedly) on the other kingdoms. Finally by the middle of the 8th century England could be said to be at least nominally Christian.

In Scandinavia we find a variety of scenarios for the conversion to Christianity. Denmark was converted in an effort by monarchal forces to consolidate their total control of the land. Norway, which had been a loose confederation of free landholders, was the object of attempts to conquer the country by men snch as Olafr Tryggvason who then imposed monarchal control over the whole land. It was during these attempts that freemen left the region and settled on the previously uninhabited island called Iceland. Iceland peacefully converted to Christianity in the year 1000 by a vote of its parliament. The last region to be conquered by Christian kings was Uppland, in Sweden, where the last great heathen temple of Uppsala was burned in the year 1100.

The pre-Christian traditions, of course, continued long after official conversions had taken place. For hundreds of years there existed in Europe the same type of religious creolism or syncretism one now finds in the Caribbean basin. For the history of left-hand path ideas the all-important figure of Odin underwent a radical — yet predictable — splitting of image. He was — like all the other gods — portrayed as the epitome of evil. In parts of Germany the speaking of his name was forbidden. It is for this reason that the modern German name for the day of the week usually called after him was renamed *Mittwoch*, "Mid-Week," while Thor (German Donnar) keeps his weekday name, *Donnerstag*. The original name survives in some German dialects as *Wodenestag* or *Godensdach*.(27) However, he also retained his patronage over the ruling elite— even after Christian conversion. All the Anglo-Saxon kings continued to claim descent from Woden,(28) and in the English language he retains his weekday name, Wednesday (Woden's-day).

In the spiritual technology or magic of the ancient Germanic peoples the Odinic magician would, by using runic formulas, actually transform himself into a god-like being analogous to the general characteristics of the god Odin. In this transformed state he would then work his will directly upon the fabric of the world— again usually by using the sacred runes first won by his patron god, Odin. In the most ancient period these called themselves Erulians— which means "those who are 'risen up' into a god-like state."(29)

The model of behavior provided by Odin — a brooding and relentless seeker of knowledge and power — can be seen as an archetypal foreshadowing of the early modern myth of Dr. Johann Faustus who broke all barriers in his search for these qualities.

What is essential to realize about the left-hand path aspects of ancient Odinism is that it provided a traditional, established method of self-transformation along a divine model without an intended melding with that god. Ancient Odinism, derived from the same ultimate religious stream of thought that we find in eastern Indo-European forms of the left-hand path, was a path of making the self godlike according to the mythic and heroic patterns exalted in the Germanic national traditions. It is into this general religious matrix that Christian ideas were inserted— and so left-hand path ideas rising up in the cultural context should not be unexpected. Note also that the form of Christianity first accepted by the Goths was one not lacking in left-hand path qualities!

The Slavic Left-Hand Path

The Slavic mind has always been one more "at home" with the Devil than perhaps any other European culture. This perhaps stems from the fact that the Slavs conservatively maintained up into recent years a cult of household spirits whose nature was quite ambiguous in terms of "good" and "evil."

John Bennett in his introduction to Ouspensky's *Talks with a Devil* remarks:

> The devils are not hostile to man except in so far as man is a friend of God. It is they who have been responsible for every kind of technical progress: from them mankind learned the arts of iron working, brewing and distilling; the Devil himself discovered fire, built the first mill, and constructed the first wagon. The art of reading and writing was one of his gifts to mankind. All these were bestowed to make man independent of God and so break the link whereby man was able to help God in governing the world.(30)

Two kinds of devils can be identified in Slavic lore: one is called Lukhavi, which means "crafty one," and the other is Chort, which simply means "the black one."(31) The "crafty" devil seems the more archaic and most truly Slavic. The appellation as *Chort* seems clearly to be an influence from the dualistic cults which became extremely popular in Slavic regions in the Middle Ages and after.

In Russian lore the Devil is often seen as a personification of the material world— a point of view informed by both the ancient Slavic idea of the Lukhavi (providing skills and knowledge on how to manage the material universe) and by the idea of Chort (embodying the material world in opposition to the spiritual world).

This later dualistic aspect is clarified by M. P. Dragomanov who shows how Satanail, a medieval Slavic form of the name of Satan, plays central role in the creation of the world and man. God tells Satanail to dive into the primeval sea to retrieve earth and flint. Satanail gives God the material, God keeps some in his right hand and creates dry land on the sea— out of his left hand he gives flint to Satanail— who creates his angels: "hewed a numberless raging rout of carnal gods."(32) Some traditions hold that Satanail created the visible world, god the invisible, while others hold that Satanail creates man's body and God gives the soul. These ideas are clearly either influenced by Bogomil teachings, or are related to them in some way.

Indeed, a Bulgarian tradition holds that the devil — called Zerzevul — created a counter paradise to oppose that created by God. In triumph, Zerzevul says to his band of devils:

> Ho, my band, have you seen that we too can make a paradise like what God can make? Come, go in, eat, drink, of everything that is inside; I don't forbid you anything the way the Lord forbade something to the men he put inside to live with his wife; I give you freedom to do whatever you want to do. Say this to the people: whatever any one wants to do let him command. In my paradise there is food, drink, pleasure-seeking, as much as they ask of me.(33)

It might be noted that among 20th century writers in the Russian cultural field, Ouspensky saw the Devil as an obsession with the material world, while Gurdjieff saw him as an extraterrestrial being.

The Slavic devil is an important, if usually obscure, prototype for the archetype of the materialistic libertinism of late 19th and 20th century Satanism, as expressed, for example by Anton LaVey.

Although there are significant differences between the root of pre-Christian western Indo-European ideology in Europe and the root of that same tree among the eastern Indo-Europeans, there are profound similarities as well. In addition, through the nomadic northern Iranian tribes, such as the Scythians and Sarmatians, eastern ideas probably influenced the Hellenic, Slavic and Germanic worlds. This contact was maintained from as early as 700 BCE to as late as the 6th

century CE. Indo-Iranian influence also streamed into the west— into the European as well as Middle Eastern regions for several centuries of the Hellenistic period— from about 300 BCE to 200 CE.

The similarities between the original western and eastern roots of the Indo-European worlds make it clear that had the western root continued its evolution along its own lines of development, there would indeed be an establishment oriented left-hand path tradition in the west today. Or if it were not a part of the establishment itself, it would certainly be tolerated — and perhaps even encouraged — by the mainstream culture.

However, the historical development of the western world portrays a split heritage. The ideologies of the Middle East— or the true *southern* tradition — invaded the north in the form of Christianity and eventually forged an uncomfortable symbiosis with the original European culture. Virtually all of the manifestations of "heretical," "deviant," or "diabolical" religious behavior in Europe from the time of the arrival of Christianity to the present day can be traced to native impulses present in the manifold pre-Christian culture of Europe.

It almost goes without saying that in order to understand fully the left-hand path as it developed in the west, one must grasp the essence of the Middle Eastern or southern tradition— both in its right-hand path and left-hand path manifestations. It is in these cultures that the popular modern attitudes and imageries of the left-hand path — often embodied in the word "Satanism" — developed and were spread.

Left-Hand Path among the Semites

For a complete understanding of the history of what would be thought of as "Satanism" in western Europe, no culture of antiquity is more important, with the possible exception of the Iranian/Zoroastrian, than that of the Semites in general and the Hebrews in specific. A complete survey of this field is not possible here,(34) besides which an investigation will only show that from the *philosophical* perspective the Hebrew tradition has very little to offer of an original character. Its chief importance is historical. The Hebrews forged a synthesis of several theological and mythic streams— from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan and Iran— along with their own primitive Semitic religion.(35) But as the Hebraic religion, as we have records of it, is relatively monolithic, it gives us little evidence of the development or existence of anything autochthonous which is akin to the left-hand path. However, the synthetic Hebraic and later Judaic (after 586 BCE) religion provided a definite morphology and terminology for a whole "symbology of evil" to the later Christian and Islamic worlds, and also to the Gnostics who made wide use of Judaic mythology to illustrate their (often left-hand path) ideas.

It will be seen that the Semitic view of the world, although not originally strictly dualistic, contained a hyperintensive feeling for the notions of sin and redemption, and of defilement and purification. This made for a kind of de facto dnalism that proved to be even more durable than that of Zoroaster— although the Semitic religion was certainly influenced by the mythology and theology of Iranian Mazdaism at a secondary level.

Currently to be able to understand fully the Semitic mind-set, we must start historically with a non-Semitic people: the Sumerians. These already heterogeneous people had their origins either in the north or east of Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq)(36) and by 4500 BCE had established themselves in the region around the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Their magnificent civilization would last in its authentic Sumerian form until around 1750 BCE— but it wonld continue in Semiticized form until after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus II of Persia in 539 BCE. The springtime of Sumerian civilization was between 3200 and 2360 BCE. It would be oversimplifying to try to lump the Sumerians together with their successor Semitic systems. (J.B. Russell makes this error in his volume *The Devil*, p. 84ff.)

The Sumerians were apparently constantly fearful of sudden and catastrophic upheavals of natural and socioeconomic origin. This has been contrasted with the Egyptian idea of ordered processes within secure surroundings, and has been traced to the contrast in their agricultural cycles in their two river systems: the Nile dependent on the regular rising of the waters to flood the river valley, and the Mesopotamian region, dependent on rain and storm to bring waters to the

valleys of the Tigres and Euphrates. Be all that as it may, the original Sumerians seemed to have no real concept of immanent divinity throughout the cosmos with everything ruled by the divine force of *me* (divine order).

"Evil," as such, was understood as a disruption of *me* in the forms of death and disease. The introduction of death is not the responsibility of an evil figure, but rather of the Earth-God himself, En-ki, who, instead of "determining the destiny" of certain herbs, *eats* them. In doing this En-ki committed a "cosmic crime" in that he "did not behave in accordance with the principle that he incarnated." Eliade, 1978, pp. 58-59)

In the Sumerian religion the gods were forms or principles which worked together in *me*. Man's role was to "serve the gods," i.e. to serve *me*. It is, however, also recognized that it is the gods themselves — not man — who introduce the original disruptions in *me*. Thus when Gilgamesh, who is perhaps the oldest epic hero in the history of literature, struggles against death to attempt to gain immortality, he is not seen by the Sumerians as one who strives against the gods and who is thus "evil," but rather as one who is attempting to restore the original order of things (*me*). Gilgamesh is seen essentially as a *divine* hero, not as an evil transgressor. When looking at the originally Sumerian material in Mesopotamian religion one is struck by an ambivalence reminiscent of the Hindu tradition.(37)

The Sumerian culture underwent a curious metamorphosis. From as early as 2800 BCE Semitic peoples (later identified with the Akkadians) began to infiltrate Sumer from the north and west and began to "Semiticize" the culture, the language, and the religion from the lower echelons of the society. (38) From 2350 to 2150 BCE Akkadian kings ruled in Mesopotamia, a rulership destroyed by invasions of the Gutians from Iran who dominated Akkadia until the Sumerians underwent a renaissance and restored themselves to power in 2050. But by 1950 another Semitic group, the Assyrians, gained control. Semitic culture and language would dominate Mesopotamia until the Persian conquest in 539 BCE.

To a great extent the Mesopotamian Semites — the Akkadians, Assyrians and Babylonians — were Sumerianized in their religious and cultural forms. They adopted Sumerian writing (cuneiform), and outer cultic forms and mythology. The old Sumerian myths were virtually Semiticized. But the Semites were an essentially different people who brought their own connotations to these Sumerian forms.

The optimistic Sumerian anthropogenesis — in which man is created by the gods — is reinterpreted so that humanity is created from the blood of an evil entity: Kingn. Thus in the Semitic version man is "condemned by his own origin."(39) Here we have a basic idea very close to "original sin." This rather pessimistic anthropogenesis then virtually necessitates a new cult form of personal prayers and penitential psalms. Here we hear the penitent praying for the forgiveness of sins and the removal of transgressions.(40) It would also be a mistake to see the Mesopotamian Semites as mere forerunners to the Hebraic attitudes. The Babylonian view of human existence was far more optimistic than that of the Hebrews.

The so-called Canaanites were another important near eastern Semitic people. They occupied the region of the coast of the eastern Mediterranean Sea from as early as 3000 BCE. Really there were a series of apparently Semitic city-based civilizations in this region— each being in turn conquered by semi-nomadic "barbarians." The Hebrews, or Israelites, who invaded the territory around 1250 BCE, were just another in this series. We know most about this civilization, identified in the Old Testament as "Canaan," from texts found at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) on the Syrian coast. From this material it seems that the Canaanites had an ambivalent attitude toward what might be termed "evil." Ultimately, they saw the world locked in a struggle between the forces of life — represented by Ba'al and his sister Anath — and death — represented by Mot. There seems to be a recognition of this fact and an acceptance of its reality.(41)

From this brief survey of some non-Hebraic religious attitudes it is clear that the polytheistic systems of Semitic religion were not particularly obsessed with the evil nature of the world or of humanity. However, the Mesopotamian Semitic evidence does show an early predisposition toward a notion of "original sin." At the same time it is very difficult to talk in terms of a left-hand path / right-hand path dichotomy in early Sumerian or Semitic forms. This is probably due to the

fact that we do not possess enough knowledge about these people's philosophical understandings of the relevant issues. Gilgamesh stands out as a heroic individuated being, possessed of self-consciousness who desires immortality— which would qualify him at least in part as a paradigmatic figure on the left-hand path. It is most likely that the manifold and ambivalent traditions of early Mesopotamian and near eastern religion, like the old Indo-European or Egyptian traditions, contain the seeds of what will develop into a right-hand path / left-hand path dichotomy. In the view of the orthodox philosophies of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam the religious systems of Canaan and Babylon (as well as that of Egypt) were fundamentally "wicked," i.e. essentially if not left-hand path at least open to the values of the left-hand path, among others. This allowance for such multifaceted religious freedoms would in and of itself be theological grounds for condemnation from an orthodox monotheistic perspective. But no such dichotomy was really possible until after the Hebrew synthesis.

The Orthodox Hebrew Synthesis of the Right-Hand Path

The Hebrew or Israelite synthesis of their own primitive nomadic Semitic beliefs with elements from the traditions of the Egyptians and Canaanites, as well as the Babylonians and Iranians, took place over a long period of time between about 1750 and 500 BCE. Hebraic nomads had become somewhat settled in the region around Hebron in the earliest phase— while somewhat later the Israelites (or more accurately the Arameans) settled down in the region of Shechem. These tribes lived on the fringes of the urbanized apparently indigenous Canaanite society. These Arameans had probably begun to assimilate certain features of the Canaanite religion during the time between 1750 and 1250 BCE. Into this region came a third wave of Hebraic settlers following about 1250 BCE. These were probably a mixture of Hebrew tribes that had been settled in Egypt for several centuries and perhaps some Egyptian and other non-Hebraic peoples who had been outwardly Hebraicized during the exodus from Egypt under the leadership of a (former) Egyptian priest named Moses. An important synthesis of ancient Hebraic, Canaanite and Egyptian philosophies took place in this cultural context during the centuries between 1200 and 600 BCE. The Israelite kingdom was utterly conquered by the Babylonians in 587, and from that time to 538 the Israelites lived in exile within Babylonia— the so-called Babylonian captivity. There they further assimilated Babylonian — but especially also Iranian lore — which is the most important catalytic element in the development of a Hebraic or Judaic "philosophy of evil."

When looking at the Hebrew-Judaic material, i.e. canonical and apocryphal Biblical literature of that tradition, it must be remembered that these myths do not — as popularly assumed — constitute a continuous and coherent narrative. They are made up of fragments of myths and legends often pieced together with little or no effort being made in the text to make the narrative consistent. The first example of this occurs in Genesis, where one complete and coherent version of the creation myth is offered (I:2-4) and then later another quite different yet equally complete and coherent version is given (II: 4-25). The former is certainly an older version, the other being added later (probably after the Babylonian Captivity). This is typical of Hebraic mythology, but is an aspect of it usually clouded by popular assumptions that it is a consistent and unified "revealed" text, rather than the product of centuries of re-editing by historically and cross-culturally influenced writers. (42)

The only original and unique ideas the ancient Hebrews might have had on the subject of this aspect of "evil" have been submerged under layers of assimilations from other cultures. It seems likely that the Hebraic immigrants from Egypt brought with them a theological and ritual structure that had been heavily influenced by Egyptian thinking. It has been speculated that Moses was influenced by the ideas of the monotheistic reforms of the pharaoh Akhnaten, and it is further possible that the Hebraic ideas of who or what might oppose the divine plan was influenced by the shape of the established cult of Set during in XIXth dynasty (1300-1200 BCE). The end of this dynasty is the time most likely during which the "exodus" of the Semitic tribes form Egypt took place. The monotheistic reform of Hebrew religion undertaken by Moses would naturally lead to a model of belief in which the "One God," called by Moses "Yahweh," *could* be opposed in his

plans by another force in the cosmos. Before these reforms were begun, Hebraic polytheism would have accounted for "evil" — i.e., death and disease — as a part of a whole patchwork of cosmic reality— as the Canaanites had. So in Mosaic monotheism, perhaps coupled with knowledge of the principle represented by Set, the *potential* ground work was laid for this cosmic opposition. In reality, however, awareness of the full implications of this potential took centuries to develop.

As the third wave of Hebraic migrations came into the Levant, archaeological evidence strongly indicates that far from destroying everyone and everything in the "Promised Land," to make it pure for "God's Chosen," (Joshua 1-18) the Canaanite "Land of Milk and Honey" almost completely seduced the Hebrews, as did the Moabite god, Ba'al-Peor (Numbers 25). The Hebraic religion from the time of the exodus to the Babylonian Captivity indicates a continuous assimilation of Canaanite myths and cult forms— and periodic opposition to this ongoing tendency by the so-called prophets.

The Canaanite influence on the Hebraic concepts of "evil" comes in one form in the idea of a cosmic *conflict* between the forces of life (Ba'al) and death (Mot). The Hebrew word for death is MOT (*mot*). Also the notion of a cosmic rebellion on the part of younger gods to overthrow older gods is very strong in Canaanite mythology(43) where we see that Ba'al is not only locked in combat with Death (Mot), but he is also trying to overthrow the older god, El. El is a "Name of God" also taken over into Hebrew, see *El Shaddai*), and in the plural *Elohim*. The plural can be used in Hebrew to indicate the magnitude of something without necessarily implying that there is actually more than one of them.

As far as the Babylonian influence is concerned, it probably came more indirectly through the agency of Canaanite theology than directly from the Babylonian into the Hebrew. This was true until the time of the Babylonian Captivity, at which time the Hebraic, now Judaic, theology was opeued to two great direct influences: Babylonian learning, and Iranian cosmology and doctrine.

During the period of the Babylonian Captivity a learned priestly tradition developed within Judaism. The attitude of this priestly tradition toward "evil" was twofold. First it is the result of the *lust* of the "Sons of God" (Heb. *bene elohim*) for the daughters of men. (Gen. VI:1-7) The resulting mixture of divine and human natures ends in the revelation of forbidden divine *knowledge* to humanity by the "Sons of God." In the "Enochian" literature there are lists of the (demonic) angels and the categories of "forbidden knowledge" they reveal to mankind. (I Enoch 8) "Thns the myth links the origin of culture and the origins of evil in the world... Lust causes the transgression of the boundary between divine and human; this results in humans learning forbidden mysteries, and this in turn leads us to the corruption of the earth."(44) This myth of the origin of forbidden knowledge which results in the influx of "evil" is a parallel alternative (or allomorph) of the better known Edenic myth.

Evil is therefore associated both with *knowledge* and *carnal existence*— one an evil of the *psychê*, the other an evil of the *flesh*. These two poles will prove to be ongoing features of schools of the left-hand path in the western world.

Although in the earliest phase the Hebrew myth of the Garden of Eden, as well as the whole cosmology found in Genesis (1-2), is of Semito-Sumerian origin, the paradigmatic correspondences with Iranian mythology seem too close to ignore totally.(45) It is most likely that the basic *structures* of the Edenic myth were taken into Judaic lore from the body of Canaanite-Babylonian traditions and that only later were some of the interpretations of the myths "enlightened" by more abstract Iranian thought, which, along with Hellenic ideas, would form the basis of the secret tradition in Judaism (Kabbalah, etc.). These aspects will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 concerning *gnosis*. In any event we again have an alternate way in which "evil," in the form of *divine knowledge*, is introduced to humanity. This myth can be said to be a part of the lore of the left-hand path only in the traditions of non-Zoroastrian Iranian systems (e.g. Mithraism) or in some of the myriad of Gnostic sects (e.g. the Ophites).

The Hamitic Left-Hand Path
The Cult of Set

Set is an Egyptian god-form that became a model of the paragon of evil in the latter days of the civilization. But that was not always the case with Set. Although Set was not always considered "evil," the characteristics which he displayed remained more or less consistent. It is the culture and its values which changed. We are, of course, especially interested in understanding this ancient god-form as much as possible due to the present day importance and influence of the Temple of Set on the contemporary left-hand path.

The culture of the Nile civilization had developed to a level of unique and independent existence before any significant contact was made with the Sumerian civilization around 3000 BCE(46)— this influence seemed only to provide impetus to an already ancient culture. Egypt began to take cultural shape around 5000 BCE, and to have become a distinct civilization in the pre-historic period between 3800 and 3200 BCE. From these foundations Egyptian civilization would continue in its singular and culturally independent form until its loss of political independence to Rome in 42 BCE with the death of Cleopatra. But the fact that knowledge of hieroglyphics continued to be preserved by Egyptian priests and scribes until the 5th century CE(47) indicates that we are dealing with an intellectual culture with a continuous living legacy of at least four thousand years. Thus the Egyptian civilization is the oldest, most continuous culture known to us. The only possible rival to this claim would be the Chinese civilization which has far more recent roots (about 1500 BCE), but which actually continues to the present day.

It is probable that in most of its fundamental aspects Egyptian religion had reached a refined and highly articulated stage of development by the beginning of the Dynastic Period around 3100-2750 BCE.(48) Although at this time the material culture found along the Nile between the Mediterranean and present-day Aswan was a fairly unified one, politically (and perhaps religiously— as the "politics" of the region was heavily influenced by cultic institutions) the land was divided into the northern delta region (Lower Egypt) and the rest of the Nile valley to the south (Upper Egypt). From the most archaic period it seems that a hawk-god (Heru/Horus) dominated in the north and a god symbolized by an unidentified beast (Suta/Set) ruled in the south.



According to traditional Egyptian history, the north effectively conquered the south and unified the country in 3100 BCE under the first pharaoh, Menes, with his capital in the delta city of Memphis. Although the symbol of the unified country and unified cosmic principles represented by the dominant gods in each region is one depicting Horus and Set as a bipolar but single entity, there seems to have been the tendency to consider Set as the inferior, enemy aspect from this earliest beginning. However, it can not be overemphasized that the essence and power of Set was highly valued and honored by Egyptians until the close of the XXth dynasty (about 1170 BCE).

The continuity of the value of Setian ritual and magical symbolism can be seen clearly in the double crown of the pharaoh, which is made up of the red crown of northern Egypt and the white crown of southern Egypt, and the scepters of *was* 𓋴 and *tcham* 𓊽, which are clear symbolic representations of the Set-animal. These scepters were signs of the divine power which could be wielded by the gods and their incarnate agents, the pharaohs.

"Orthodox" Egyptian religion seems to have been dominated by two concepts or principles— the regulation of the cosmic/agricultural cycle embodied in the annual rising of the waters of the Nile which ensured material prosperity, and the continuance of the life of the individual in a transcendental realm beyond this world. There does not seem to be a shred of evidence beyond the statements of Herodotus (II, 123) that the Egyptians believed in any sort of earthly reincarnation or metempsychosis.(49)

It could easily lead to misunderstandings if the right-hand path / left-hand path distinction were made too early or too deeply when trying to comprehend the historical development of Egyptian religion. In many ways early Egyptian religion was much like the Sumerian or ancient Indo-European in that the strict moral dichotomy of "good" *versus* "evil" was lacking. However, as time went on the Egyptians pioneered this dichotomizing in a way very similar to that of the Zoroastrians in Persia.

The roots of one prototype of the right-hand path in the west is to be found in the Egyptian cosmic/agricultural cult built around the regular cycles of the rising of the Nile, perhaps coupled with the extreme isolation and xenophobia of the Egyptian land and culture. This religious and mythical tradition eventually became embodied in the cult of Osiris. This cult promoted and developed the idea of the regular and *internally ordered cycles* of existence and the resurrection of the body in a transcendent realm, which was perhaps understood in some way parallel to the cycles of nature experienced in the Nile valley. By the time of the ultimate development of the Osirian cult in the time of the New Kingdom (and Ptolemaic Period) it constituted an exclnsionist right-hand path cult predicated on the harmonizing of human activity with the cycles of nature. These cycles were in turn symbolized by the community of Egyptian gods and goddesses.

The Egyptian word for "a god" was *neter* (pl. *neteru*). Erik Hornung devoted a whole study to this and other terms for "god" in Egyptian. The etymology of the word is unclear.(Hornung, pp. 33-42) But his conclusion on its meaning in part states:

> In their constantly changing nature and manifestations, the Egyptian gods resemble the country's temples, which were never finished and complete, but always "under construction.
>
> The gods of Egypt ... are formulas rather than forms, and in their world one is sometimes as if displaced into a world of elementary particles. ... A god is combined with another and becomes a new being with new characteristics, and then in the next moment separates into a number of entities. What he is remains hidden, but his luminous trail can be seen, his reaction with others is clear, and his actions can be felt. He is material and spiritual, a force and a figure, he is manifest in changing forms that should be exclusive, but we know that within all this something exists and exercises power.(50)

But there was one who stood against the other *neteru* by virtue of his very character— Set. As we have already seen, the cult of Set stretches well back into the very beginning of Egyptian culture, especially in Upper Egypt. From the very beginning and throughout his history Set seems

to have stood for 1) *opposition* to certain natural processes, 2) the outside (desert, foreign lands, etc.), 3) *power* or force (physical or magical), and 4) *disturbance* of the natural order caused by the activity of these factors. These characteristics were at first seen as a necessary balance within the whole of the cosmos, but in time these very factors would become the programmatic paradigm for *evil* as seen from the Osirian Egyptian viewpoint.

Originally, however, Set was not thought of as evil so much as he was considered *overwhelmingly powerful.* Hornung writes concerning the Egyptian gods and evil:

> The gods of Egypt can be terrifying, dangerous, and unpredictable, but they cannot be evil. Originally this was true even of Seth, the murderer of Osiris. Battle, constant confrontation, confusion, questioning of the established order, in all of which Seth engages as a sort of "trickster," ar all necessary features of the existent world and of the limited disorder that is essential to living order.(51)

The "political" factor has perhaps been over-emphasized in many discussions of how and why Set became a paragon of evil in the Egyptian system. It is true that he was the major god of the earlier subjugated Upper Egypt and that he was identified as the god of foreign forces of the Semitic Hyksos people who invaded and dominated Egypt from about 1700 to 1550 BCE, and that the conflict between the Osirian priesthood and those of Amen and Set were heavily overlaid with what today we might call "political" factors.

But it also remains true that in his very essence Set represents something which is almost always treated with suspicion: the human psyche in *opposition* to the natural vehicle of the body, expressed as a force from the *outside*, giving humanity a *power* to *disturb* the natural cosmos around it. Set was the god of the outsider and foreigner and represents that quality in the Egyptian pantheon and society. Among the gods only Set was possibly truly immortal.(Bonnet, p. 714; Hornung pp. 157-158.) Set has the power and will "to act against law and order" in the universe.(Cf. Bonnet, p. 714.) Here is the essence of why the cult of Set is seen as a prototype of the left-hand path in the western tradition.

Unfortunately the Egyptian tradition, despite the great number of ancient documents available, remains one of the most difficult to understand on a consistent philosophical basis today. This is due in part to the concrete mode of expression of (pre-Hellenic) Egyptian philosophy, and in part due to their latter-day attempts to vilify and darken the function of Set— but also largely due to the Egyptian habit of ritual henotheism. As opposed to the Sumerian and Indo-European tendency to identify certain principles or functions with certain god-forms, the Egyptians would identify virtually any and all functions with practically any god-form or name. This made it very easy for them to keep all of the important functions and symbols of Set— by transferring them to gods such as Amen-Ra, Thoth and Anubis. In the latest times it seemed of the utmost importance to avoid the use of the actual *name* of Set or the depiction of the "Set-animal."

Already in the XIXth dynasty the epithet "follower of Set" was being used perjoritavely. A scribe named Kenhirkhopeshef (who died around 1191 BCE) wrote a papyrus in which he described the "Marks of the Followers of Set." The papyrus is in poor condition, hence the gaps in the text, but the description is clear enough:

> The god in him is Set ... he is a man of the people - He dies by a death of fallings ... sinews ... He is one dissolute of heart on the day of judgment ... discontent in his heart. If he drinks beer he drinks it to engender strife and turmoil. The redness of the white of his eye is this god. He is one who drinks what he detests. He is beloved of women through his greatuess — the greatness of his loving them. Though he is a royal kinsman he has the personality of a man of the people ... He will not descend into the west, but is placed on the desert as a prey to rapacious birds ... He drinks beer so as to engender turmoil and disputes ... He will take up weapons of warfare — He will not distinguish the married woman from ... As to any man who opposes him he pushes ... Massacre arises in him and he is placed in the Netherworld...(52)

From this description we can infer some clues as to the antinomian nature of some of the ancient Setian practices. When actual human beings are referred to as "followers of Set" in the ancient literature, it is usually their behavior disruptive to the order around them that is sited as the chief characteristic they demonstrate.(53)

By the twilight of the Egyptian culture from the XXIInd dynasty and into the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the Osirian cult carried out a virtual "inquisition" against the Setian cult, eradicating the images and temples of the god and celebrating festivals by torturing crocodiles— which they thought embodied the god Set. The only philosophical haven for Setian principles was in the Hellenized Gnostic sects in Egypt.

It is perhaps in this magical context of Hellenized Egyptian culture that Set reaches his greatest state of philosophical development. In one magical papyrus (Paris = PGM IV) Set is called the "Ruler over the Gods," and even the "Creator of the Gods." To a certain extent this may be explained by the old Egyptian magical tradition of henotheistic formulas, but there seems to be more at work here. It appears that during the first few centuries of this era (about 100 to 400 CE) within a sect of Gnostics known as the "Sethians" there occurred a great synthesis of Greek philosophy, Egyptian religion and magic, Judaic mythology and theology, as well as other elements from Iranian and other magico-religious systems in the eastern Mediterranean region.(54)

The ancient Egyptian god Set (Gk. Σηθ = *Seth*) became identified with, or passed into Hebrew mythology as, Seth (Heb. STh)— especially in Gnostic sects. But we do not have to go into Hebrew lore here. It is clear that the Gnostic interpretation of the "classical" myth of the conflict between Osiris and Set was interpreted as an analog to the dichotomy between the evil demiurge Ildabaoth (*Yahweh Elohim* of Genesis) = Osiris and the good (serpentine) god of light = *Seth-Typhon*. Thus the Gnostic Sethian sect could indeed be interpreted as a sort of Hellenized philosophical revival of the ancient Egyptian cult of Set. In fact the remnants of "orthodox" Egyptian religion referred to the Gnostics as a whole as "the sons of Typhon (= Set.)" In this Gnostic epilog to the history of the cult of Set, it can be seen clearly that the ancient philosophical meaning of Set as a god of opposition to natural static cycles of existence who enters nature from a position outside it to exercise his transformative power to disturb the natural order— was either continued or revived by the Hellenized Gnostic Egyptians of the early centuries of this era.

It has been theorized that the cult and figure of Set had some influence on the formation of the name and character of the Hebrew and eventually Christian *Satan*. This would be possible chiefly due to the influences that might have passed into Hebrew lore during the period in which the Hebrews were in Egypt and due to the fact that they seem to have been led from Egypt, probably around 1250 BCE by an Egyptian priest, named *Mesy*, Moses. The Egyptian *msy*, son, is also found in the name *Re-msy* or Rameses, "son of Re."(55)

The name Set probably has no etymological connection to the Semitic *stn* (Heb. *satan*, Arab. *shaitan*). But the names were doubtlessly associated at an early time among the Hebrews. In the syncretic, Hellenized world reflected in the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, it seems that Seth-Typhon may not only be linked with Satanic aspects, but with the One God of the Hebrews, Yahweh, as well. This is because the writers of the papyri were interested Yahweh (YHVH /IAO) as an expression of raw cosmic power on a physical level, not in his supposed theological role in orthodox Hebrew lore. Iao was "creator of this world"— and so his name could cause further magical transformations in it. A tendency of humans to "diabolize" the gods of their neighbors seems to be a constant theme, and a cause for continuing difficulties to historians of religious ideas.

We can hardly tell much about the ways in which the ancient Setians approached the essential questions of the left-hand path. But given the general characteristics of the god himself, it seems likely that the Setians of old practiced something very much akin to what we are calling the left-hand path. Perhaps one of the reasons why the sect was so persecuted is that it offered a path of deification for more than just the pharaohs.

Notes for Chapter 3

(1) For a discussion of the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans, see J. B. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

(2) See Mircea Eliade *History of Religious Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) vol. II, p. 257.

(3) There were a number of Mystery Schools in ancient Greece, see Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987)

(4) See Eliade *History*, vol. I, pp. 299-301.

(5) Eliade *History*, vol. II, p. 187.

(6) Eliade *History*, vol. II, pp. 189-190.

(7) Eliade *History*, vol. II, p. 190.

(8) See Plato's *Republic* (edited by Cornford), p. 351.

(9) Eliade *History*, vol. II, p. 190.

(10) See William K. C. Guthrie *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (New York: Norton, 1966, 2nd ed.) and Eliade *History*, vol. II, p. 190.

(11) Eliade *History*, vol. II, p. 191.

(12) See the biographies of Pythagoras recorded by Kenneth S. Guthrie, ed, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, 1987), pp. 57-156.

(13) See Robin Waterfield, trans., *Theology of Arithmetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, 1988).

(14) Quoted from "Little Gidding" by T. S. Eliot.

(15) For a study of the soul in Greek tradition see Erwin Rhode, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) and for an introduction to the topic in northern Europe, see Stephen E. Flowers, "Toward an Archaic Germanic Psychology," *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 11:1-2 (1983), pp. 117-138.

(16) See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: New American Library, 1978), *passim.*

(17) See Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, 2nd ed.)

(18) No real *school* of Neoplatonic Christian mysticism arose, but individual philosophers or theologians used Neoplatonic concepts, see A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.)

(19) The most coherent presentation of Epicureanism is by Lucretius *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. R. Latham, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1951). Also see the general introdnction provided by Jason L. Saunders, *Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle*. (New York: Free Press, 1966), pp. 13-57.

(20) The classic text of later Stoicism is that of Marcus Aureleus, *Meditations* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964). See also the presentation by Jason L. Saunders, *Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle*. (New York: Free Press, 1966), pp. 59-150.

(21) See Edgar C. Polomé, "Some Comments of *Völuspá* Stanzas 17-18." In: Polomé, E.C. (ed.) *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium.* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 268.

(22) Concerning the runic initiaiton of Odin, see E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 42 ff.

(23) Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 63 ff.

(24) Concerning the spiritual gifts of the Germanic gods see Polome, "Some Comments...," pp. 265ff.

(25) See Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, pp. 55 ff.

(26) For a comparison of the Celtic Lugh and the Germanic Odin, see Jan de Vries, *Keltische Religion* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961), p. 54 or Edred Thorsson, *The Book of Ogham* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1992), pp. 36-40.

(27) See Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1957), vol. II, p. 27.

(28) Recorded by Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* trans. S. Stallybrass (New York: Dover, 1966), vol IV, pp. 1709-1736.

(29) See Stephen E. Flowers *Runes and Magic* (New York: Lang, 1986), pp. 334-335, *et passim.*

(30) John Bennett "Introduction" In: P. D. Ouspensky *Talks with A Devil*, p. 1.

(31) Bennett "Introduction" In: P. D. Ouspensky *Talks with A Devil*, pp. 1-2.

(32) M. P. Dragomanov *Notes on the Slavic Religio-Ethical Legends: The Dualistic Creation of the World.* trans. E.W. Count. (= Russian and East European Series 23)
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 131.

(33) Dragomanov *Notes on the Slavic Religio-Ethical Legends*, pp. 10.

(34) A review of the correlations between Zoroastrian and Hebrew traditions is provided by Neil Forsyth, *Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1989).

(35) On the existence of a pre-Yahwist Hebrew religion see S.H. Hooke *Middle Eastern Mythology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 103 ff.

(36) For a general introduction to Sumerian civilization see Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

(37) Internal evidence shows a close connection between the Sumerian world and that of the old Indus valley civilization Kramer, pp. 280ff.

(38) Kramer, *Sumerians*, p. 42.

(39) Eliade *History*, vol. I, p. 73.

(40) See J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, 2nd ed.), pp. 391-392.

(41) For a convenient survey of Canaanite mythology see Hooke, *Middle Eastern*, pp. 79 ff.

(42) For a convenient introduction to this problem, see S.H. Hooke *Middle Eastern*, pp. 103-164.

(43) Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, p. 44.

(44) Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, p. 174.

(45) See above and Eliade, *Patterns*, pp. 290-294.

(46) On the relationship between Egypt and Mesopotamia see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

(47) E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 15.

(48) Paul Jordan, *Egypt: The Black Land* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976), pp. 78-83 and Frankfort, *Kingship*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

(49) See the *Lexikon der Aegyptologie*, vol V, p. 13.

(50) Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*. tr. John Baines (Ithica, NY: Cornell
University Press, 1982), pp. 256-257.

(51) Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, p. 213.

(52) John Romer, *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharoahs* (New York: Henry Holt, 1984), p. 67.

(53) Romer, *Ancient Lives*, pp. 90; 92.

(54) Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1986), pp. 249-309.

(55) Eliade, *History*, vol. I, p. 178.

Chapter 4
The First Millennium

At the dawn of the time that we have come to call the "Common Era" the religious and philosophical cultures of the Mediterranean and near eastern regious were in a high state of flux and dynamism. Politically and militarily the Romans had become the dominant force in that part of the world, but in the realm of philosophy Hellenic thought remained the most prestigious. But from the east — especially from the Iranian cultural sphere — religious systems of all sorts (dualistic and non-dualistic) had a continual influence on the development and reformation of sects in the west.

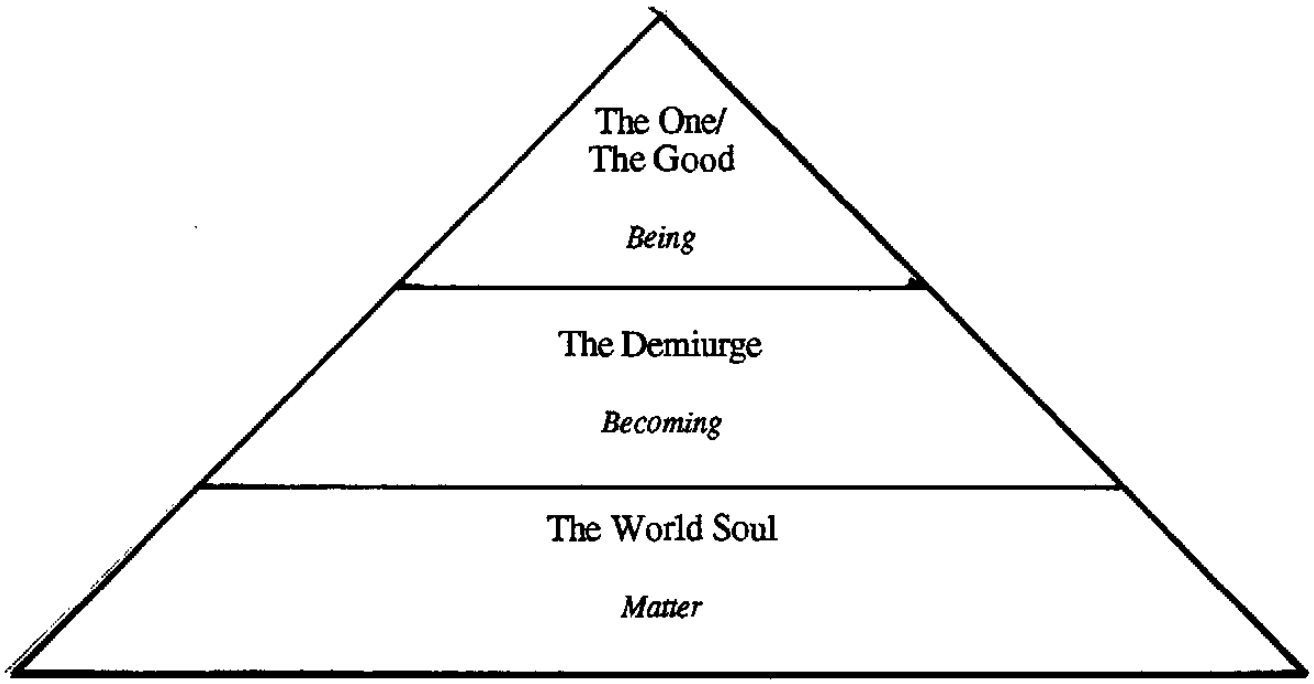
In philosophy the most important school of thought was that of Neo-Platonism, which can be dated from about 244 CE, when its chief proponent, Plotinus, became influential in Rome. This philosophy, essentially based on a system of Platonic idealism, was to be a decisive influence on all schools of "mysticism," the Judaic Kabbalah, Islamic Sufism, as well as Christian schools of mysticism. Hellenic thought also became the matrix for the reception of Iranian systems, and from such a synthesis of east and west many sects such as Mithraism, "Hermeticism," and various Gnostic systems were formed.

At this time certain sects or cults found great favor among contemporary sophisticated and philosophically trained Roman politicians, e.g. Mithraism or various Egyptian cults, while others — especially those directly connected with Judaism were reviled as being "paradoxical and degraded." (1) This is mentioned here only as a way of in some small measure giving a more balanced view to the popular image (essentially fostered by Hollywood) of the sophisticated and morally superior Jews and Christians being surrounded by barbaric and cruel Romans.

It is in this cultural milieu that Christianity, which was essentially in its earliest phase a Judaic heresy — had its origins. Early Christian doctrine can be shown to be a system developed over the years between the first and fourth centuries from a complex synthesis of Judaic, Hellenic (Neo-Platonic) and Iranian thought. From its beginning Christianity adopted and adapted elements from the various systems — theological as well as socio-political — which it sought to supersede.

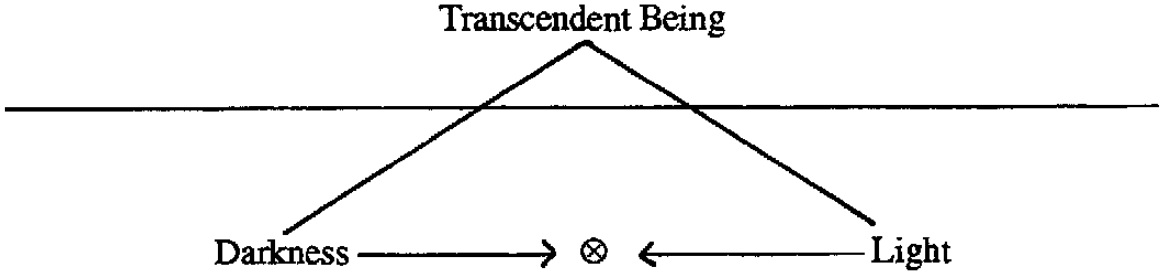
This is obviously not the place to go into all the details of this process, so I limit myself to one of the most essential aspects of this development— the place and nature of "evil." There have been many attempts to create a "Christian philosophy." This is perhaps a contradiction in terms as a *philosophy* implies a system of open-ended inquiry, while "Christian" implies that the final conclusion is already fixed, and that the philosophical jargon is just being used to sound more convincing to those impressed by such rhetoric. These attempts were utterly thwarted by the fact that there seemed to be an ongoing effort to fuse two quite distinct philosophical cosmologies and concepts of "evil" into the Christian, essentially Judaic, world view.

The first of these two philosophical stances is that of Neo-Platonism, where we find the following model:



In Christian parlance, the triad of creative principles would be renamed "the Father, Son (Logos), and Holy Spirit." Here we see a *gradual* or *hierarchical* model, i.e. one that posits a gradual decline or descent of ***Being*** (= the Good/the One) until it utterly ceases to "***Be.***" At the point where there is a ***lack of Being*** is the origin of evil. The Good is unity and Being, while evil is a negative state, a lack of Being. Each stage along the way down the gradual scale of Being is a descent into "relative evil." One way to visualize this is to imagine a flashlight shining into the night sky, as its beam grows less dense and more diffuse the darkness which is considered "evil" becomes more dense until there is no more light. In this model evil does not exist in any real way— it is by definition a lack of reality.

This negative conception of evil, evil as a lack of Being was the one eventually adopted and promoted by orthodox Christianity, but another conception existed along side it (within orthodox thought as well as in numerous Christian heresies). This was the idea of *positive evil*, i.e. it posits a *real existence* of a force of darkness identified as "evil." Historically this model was pioneered and perfected in Iranian systems derived from that of the prophet Zoroaster. The simplest representation of this model would be:



Here Darkness and Light are equally real and are locked in combat over the world and mankind which are considered mixtures of darkness and light. This system was to find a radical proponent in the prophet Mani (about 216-276 CE) who synthesized Christian, Buddhist, and Iranian ideas. Such dualism was to be the cornerstone of many of the heresies that orthodox Christianity battled for centuries. The root of the problem, or at least part of it, lies in the degree to which so-called orthodox Christianity and its scriptures have themselves been imbued with Iranian dualism. One only needs to be remember that Augustine of Hippo was at one time a Manichean, or that the Hebraic myth of Paradise was perhaps heavily influenced by Persian (Iranian) thought, to realize why it seems so natural to ascribe *reality* to evil. Although from a "philosophical" perspective the theologian might say that evil is a lack of Being, on most other levels belief in a Devil with positive powers of evil becomes attractive to resist.

Gnosticism and the Left-Hand Path

Although the ideology that is commonly known as Gnosticism has its ultimate roots in Iranian dualism, its exact shape was determined by a confluence of philosophical, theological and mythological streams from Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Platonism, mystery religions Egyptian magic and philosophy, and the nascent form of Christianity. In fact, Gnosticism is a parallel development of "orthodox Augustinian Christianity." Gnosticism is the Judeo-Christian myth superimposed over the philosophical and cosmological patterns of Iranian dualism, as orthodox Christianity is that same myth applied to the Platonic and Neo-Platonic scheme.

Where Gnosticism departs from the Iranian model is in the belief that the world and the physical universe is actually the *creation* of the evil, dark spirit, not just the zone between the spirits of light and darkness. For the Gnostic, material creation is *a priori* evil and must therefore be the result of a creative act on the part of an "evil god."

In the time between the 1st and 2nd century, the period of Gnostic foundations, there were actually dozens of major schools of Gnosticism, e.g. those of Simon (Magus), Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus and sects, e.g. the Cainites, Barbelites, Sethians, Ophites and Borborians.(2) One of the major reasons for this tremendous plurality of systems is the fact that Gnostics did not attempt to unify their doctrines into an "orthodox" system, but rather encouraged the creation of diverse schools of thought. This put them at a distinct social and political disadvantage *viz a viz* the "orthodox" Christians who strove to create a monolithic body of catholic doctrine whereby "heretics" (such as the Gnostics) and pagans could be identified and subsequently eradicated. This process of attempted elimination of heretical and pagan schools of thought — which has ultimately failed — went on for centuries into the modern age. Some vestiges of it may still be seen in fringe groups in society today in the form of free-lance hate groups using Christian dogmas to attempt to suppress religious freedom.

There are many St. Cyrils waiting to martyr today's Hyposias and bring about a new dark age. "The got the library at Alexandria— they're not getting mine!" as the button reads.

One of the most important of the early Gnostics, perhaps a true lord of the left-hand path from antiquity, is Simon Magus. Mostly we know about his philosophy from treatises written against it by early "Church Fathers." Their recounting of his philosophy seems rather accurate, as it can be corroborated with other actual Gnostic texts, but the apocryphal tales about his magical duels with the apostles, and so forth, seems like typical sectarian propaganda.(3) The figure of Simon Magus is perhaps best known from the account given of him in Acts (VIII), although the Simon mentioned there may in fact be another one and not the Gnostic "Magus" vilified by the Church Fathers.

Simon was born around 15 CE in Samaria, a region known for its irregular culture from a Jewish point of view. he was the son of an ostensibly Jewish sorcerer, bnt was educated in Alexandria in Egypt. Simon became the disciple of an "Arab" named

Dositheus, who had perhaps been a follower of "John the Baptist." This Dositheus may or may not have been the author of a text found in the "Nag Hammadi Library" called the *Three Steles of Seth* (or the *Revelation of Dositheus*).(4) Simon is said to have traveled widely, to Persia and Arabia, as well as Egypt and elsewhere always in search of magical lore. In any event, when Dosithens died (around 29 CE) Simon took over his school called, until then the Dositheans, now the Simonians. Dositheus had had a female disciple named Helene, and Simon later traveled with his main disciple, a former slave and prostitute from Tyre, also known by the name Helene. However, they were probably not the same person. But it is certain that Simon did have a companion whore with whom he practiced erotic magic, some of which made use of semen and menstrual blood. (A practice shared by tantrism and later sexual magic practiced by Aleister Crowley.) Because this and other features of Simon's practices which link up with certain eastern ideas, it is most likely that the accounts were not merely propaganda by his enemies. Simon is said to have died in Rome where he was engaged in a magical contest with the apostles Peter and Paul. One account has it that he died while trying to fly to heaven (while Peter prayed for his fall). (5) Another report has it that he was buried alive, but failed to resurrect himself.(6)

It is quite possible that Simon was an initiate of the occidental branch of the "Iranian mysteries," hence the appropriateness of his cognomen "Magus." This priesthood was quite strong in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor at this time. But Simon's true importance is his role as a nexus for certain preexisting ideas, a possible originator of new realizations, and a teacher of future Gnostic leaders. He was the teacher of Menander, who practiced a "bath of immortality" in which a visible fire descended into the water to bestow miraculous power on the initiate. Menander was in turn the teacher of Saturninus and Basilides, both important Gnostic teachers.(7)

Simon taught a cosmology that was an ingenions synthesis of Iranian dualism and Platonic idealism. He held that the One, the undivided and eternal Divine Mind (Gk. *Nous*), *reflected* upon and within itself, thus giving rise to the First Thought (Gk. *Epinoia*) and thns also the first aeon (Gk. *Aion*), also called *Ennoia* or *Sophia*, wisdom. Unity is broken, Duality is begun, and the Fall into manifestation has been set into motion. Hans Jonas summarizes that "... through the act of reflection the indeterminate and only negatively describable power of the [One] turns into a positive principle committed to the object of its thinking, even though that object is itself."(8) This process of reflection is continned as successive emanations. each having less of the original Unity of divine *Nous*.

Simon taught that the One Mind, the True God of Light, had nothing to do with the creation of the material universe, and that in fact the One Mind was not even aware of its existence. This world, he taught, was the creation of a wicked demiurge, whom he identified with the Creator of Jewish tradition. It is because he had determined Yahweh Elohim to be evil that he concluded that his Laws were also actually wicked and led men to evil, not to good. This, then, is the root of Simon's libertinism and antinomianism— the practice of willfully breaking normative codes to attain higher spiritual truths.

In Simon's system, the First Thought, the Aeon *Epinoia*, fell through all of the successive Aeons and was eventually incarnated as a human woman. She had transmigrated from female body to female body throughout history as the Rnlers (Gk *Archons*) fought to possess her. She had been Helen of Troy, for example. Simon believed that he had found the current incarnation of *Epinoia* in the persona of his consort, Helene, the whore of Tyre. He also held himself to be the incarnation of the Divine Mind itself. So in the terrestrial act of saving and redeeming Helene, Simon saw a reflection of the Ultimate Subject, the *Nous*, redeeming its First Object, *Epinoia*.

Many of the doctrines taught by Simon, whether he originated them or not, became mainstays of Gnostic thought throughout the centuries. Hans Jonas epitomizes his novel teaching as "...the revolt against the world and its god in the name of absolute spiritual freedom."(9) In this bold doctrine Simon Magus shows himself to be a true heir to and prophet of the left-hand path.

Gnostic sects are especially difficult to study because the creation of differing systems was part of the initiation into them at the highest levels. Leaders were encouraged to innovate and generate more sects. Bnt there are certain common characteristics among most of them which make them *Gnostic.*

The major Gnostic tenets adhered to by most sects are:

1) Dualism, i.e. that there is a strict dichotomy between *spirit*, or that which is good and created by God, and *matter*, or that which is evil and created and ruled by the Archons.
2) Absolute transcendence of God, i.e. God, as the "Father of the Spirit," is in no way mixed np with the matter of this world.
3) Gnosis, i.e. that "salvation" is to be gained by *gnosis*, "knowledge," of a suprarational, experiential kind. This is not intellectual knowledge as we usually think of it, but a direct comprehension of the transcendent absolute: God.
4) Election, i.e. the individual Gnostic is "called" or "elected" to his status from the transcendent source of light beyond the cosmos (natural order).
5) Aions or cycles of existence which act as gradual barriers between this world and the realm of transcendent light.

Some of these tenets are, in some form, shared by other schools of thought, such as Neo-Platonism or Hermeticism but this combination of tenets sets Gnostic sects apart from all others.

Gnostic sects hold that the material world is ruled by an evil force, and most say that the material world is actually the creation of the evil demiurge. What might be surprising is that when Gnostic thinking is applied to the Judeo-Semitic myth of Genesis, a picture which is the absolute reversal of the conventional understanding emerges. In the Gnostic mind the (*Yahweh*) *Elohim* of Genesis is identified as the demiurge, creator god of this world— that is, the Evil One.

Yahweh, called Ildabaoth by many Gnostic sects, created the world and the natural parts of humanity, but tried to keep mankind in slavery and darkness, separate from the transcendent light. The savior of humanity is the Serpent (Heb. *nachash*) who is the bringer of light from beyond the cosmos. Especially those schools which extoled the virtues of the Serpent, e.g. the Ophites (Gk *ophis*, serpent) and the Naasenes (from a Greek rendering of Hebrew *nachash*) could easily be identified on a snperficial level as practitioners of the left-hand path. Their spiritual aim is to become god-men in life and to maintain their identities — as spiritual entities — as they pass through the *aions* to reach the ultimate source of light. Some see this as a true *imitatio Christi.*

To Ophite Gnostics the figure of Christ is identified with the Serpent — as the Son of the Good God. Christ came as a manifestation of the light-bearing Serpent. The identification between the Serpent and the Messiah can be made on the ground of the Greek occult science of *gematria* as well. In the Kabbalistic technique known as *gematria*, in which every letter has a numerical equivalent, the Hebrew word for the Serpent of Eden: *nachash* (= N.Ch.Sh. = 50 + 8 + 300 = 358) and the word Messiah, Anointed One, King (M.Sh.Y.Ch. = 40 + 300 + 10 + 8 = 358) work out to be the same. In gematria if two words have the same numerical value they are in Essence identical on a higher level of being. The Serpent bronght humanity *knowledge* (*gnosis*) of good and evil (Gen 3:1-7) and can further aid man in gaining the fruit of eternal life, thus making man like God, or like Christ.

Of the five major traits of Gnostic thinking mentioned above, all but the radical dualism is in some way shared by the contemporary intellectual left-hand path philosophy of the Temple of Set. This rejection of radical dualism is also the principal distinction between what can properly be called Gnosticism and that which can be called Hermeticism. Gnostics have inherited the basic positive dualism of the Zoroastrians, while the more precise Hermeticists have maintained the Platonic and hence Neo-Platonic model. This

model was perhaps in some sense shared by certain Egyptian priesthoods, and it is noteworthy that the cradle of this Greco-Egyptian philosophy is to be found along the Nile.

It is, of course, this heterodox synthesis of Hellenic, Semitic, Egyptian and Iranian ideas which is the oriental matrix of the so-called western magical tradition. Those ideas were re-synthesized in late medieval and Renaissance western Europe, and then again renewed — during the "occult revival" of the late 19th and early 20th century. But before we can fully appreciate the heterodox value of these ideas, we must understand what is meant by "orthodoxy."

Christian orthodoxy is really founded on Augustine of Hippo's synthesis of Neo-Platonic philosophy and Judeo(-Christian) mythology.(10) Although he wrote extensively against all of the numerous "heresies" of his day, he too had at one time been an adherent of Manicheanism. The four pillars of doctrine upon which Augustine's system of orthodoxy rests are: 1) that God is a *Trinity* (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)— three and one at the same time, 2) that *free-will* is enjoyed by God absolutely and that man at one time had this, but 3) man transgressed against God's commandments and committed *original sin* which separates man from God and with which all men are born, and 4) only the *grace* (free-will gift) of God can save a man. What is specifically orthodox Christian about this is the idea that Jesus (the Son) was a unique historical phenomenon of God's grace and is the way by which all men are to be saved.

There is a certain genius of sorts in Augustine's system in that it is founded on an irrational basic theological premise (the *Trinity*), which is derived from the Neo-Platonic doctrine of *emanations* — the Logos emanates from the One and the World Soul is created by the Logos. man is put in the position of having transgressed against God's law as a matter of his own fault — the fault for this can not be laid at God's doorstep for, after all, he gave man free-will. Man choose to rebel against God (perhaps in league with Satan) and is thus eternally separated from God. In this position man can only be "saved" by God's gift to him. If a man turns to God the orthodox view is that it is not by his own will or effort that it has been done, but rather it is a *sign* of God's grace that a man does so. Thus in this system of doctrine, man's *will* is utterly devalued— really made nnreal. True free-will was only exercised by Adam and the punishment for his transgression is now visited on every offspring of the human species. This is by far the most complex and convoluted explanation of a right-hand path philosophy known. One of the main reasons for its convolution is the historical fact that it represents an attempt to create a dogmatic, *inflexible*, pseudo-rational hybrid between Judaic (Semitic) theology and Hellenic (Indo-European) ideology. This hybrid seemed workable with Gnostic flexibility; however, submitted to councils of Church Fathers who approved or disapproved dogmas the cracks in the system would always be obvious. If we are to understand the historical development of the left-hand path in the west a firm idea of the essence of the right-hand path is extremely helpful.

It is often tempting to be drawn into discussions of the Judeo-Christian models of *evil* when exploring the left-hand path philosophy in the west. It must be continually remembered, however, that in the "west," as in the "east," the right-hand path and the left-hand path are models of spiritual working— not models of "good" *versus* "evil." The great problem in this is that from the right-hand path viewpoint it is usually understood as precisely that: a battle between *good* (= the right-hand path) and *evil* (= the left-hand path). This is most likely to be explained in terms of the psychology of adherents of the right-hand path. The essence of "knowledge" for followers of the right-hand path (especially in the west) tends to be *faith* or belief (Gk. *pistis*). Those who have *pistis* as the object of their knowledge — those who are true believers — tend to think always in "binaric"(11) terms of yes/no, right/wrong, good/evil, *ad nauseam*. Bnt in actuality there is nothing evil about the left-hand path, in fact most of what contemporary western man likes to point to as examples of evil are the results of the philosophies of blind *faith* — the Inquisition, concentration camps, gulags, and so on.

Was Jesus a Lord of the Left-Hand Path?

This may, seem a ludicrous question to ask, but the perfection of the left-hand path comes about from asking questions. Is it possible that the teacher called Jesus was in fact a virtual Satanist in his own day and time whose teachings were so corrupted by unscrupulous followers that what he taught is for all intents and purposes buried in a morass of conflicting dogmas and doctrines? I can not hope to answer this qnestion fully here, but I think I can present some provocative evidence suggesting that Jesus was not what the institution founded in his name later made him out to be. To begin to answer this question I will use evidence both from within and outside Christian literature.

The criteria for being named a lord of the left-hand path, it will be remembered, are that the person either developed for himself and taught a magical (willed) system of evolutionary self-deification with an antinomian embracing of elements within the culture of the individual considered to be forbidden or taboo (hence "Satanic"). Perhaps shockingly Jesus fulfills most of these criteria if the evidence is viewed objectively.

Morton Smith's study, *Jesus the Magician*, is perhaps the greatest single trove of information concerning the probable true nature of the "Naasarene." Smith reports what the *non*-Christian contemporaries said of Jesus.(12) For us the important elements of this report are that he was said to be the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier (named Panthera) and a prostitute, that he became expert in magic and became "a son of a god" by these practices, that he taught his followers to despise Jewish Law and to practice a sexually libertine doctrine of love. Of course, I am well aware that ideological enemies can, and do, simply make up the wildest most unsubstantiated stories for propagandistic reasons. But surprisingly there is ample evidence for this interpretation within the very Gospel accounts themselves.

One interesting bit of evidence that, at least to outsiders, Jesus was thought to be a Satanic or "evil" god — or "son of a god" — is graphically portrayed in a well-known piece of graffito in the imperial palace on the Palatine hill in Rome (ca. 200 CE):



The drawing — scratched in the plaster of a school room wall — depicts a donkey-headed figure being crucified with a man raising his hand below the figure. An inscription reads (in bad Greek): "Alexamenos worships god." The donkey-headed figure is, in this cultural context, to be identified with Set-Typhon— by this time a god of evil in the Helleno-Egyptian mythology. So at least for some Jesus had perhaps been identified with Set-Typhon. Perhaps he was seen as the "son" of this god? Well, perhaps this is so, as the Jewish god *Yah(weh)*, in Hellenic manuscripts represented as *Iao* [pron. ee-ah-oh], was unequivocally identified with Set-Typhon by the Egyptians themselves. This is fitting since Set was the "god of foreigners" among the highly xenophobic Egyptians and the Jews were the largest foreign population in Egypt at the time. Besides the Egyptian (Coptic) word for donkey just happens to be *io* or *eio*— which sounded very much like the Hellenic representation of *Yah!*(13) Evidence inside the Gospels pointing to this symbolic complex includes Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on an ass he told his disciples to steal from the town (Mt. 21:1-7)

Evidence inside the Gospels shows the antinomian nature of Jesus' work and teachings— at least from the viewpoint of the established Jewish culture and religion of his day. Jesus rejected the practice of the Law. In words reported to be his own he says: "think not that I am come to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace bnt a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, etc." (Mt. 10:34-35). Jesus was a social revolutionary bent upon the annihilation of the family and tribes as the Jews had known them. In contradistinction to the orthodox Jewish belief in the salvation of the *whole people* at a future time, Jesus taught the salvation of the *individual* here and now: "... the kingdom of god is within you." (Lk. 17:21). He not only performed miracles or magical feats himself but exhorted his followers to emulate him: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do ..." (Jn. 14:12).

Curiously when Jesus is accused by the Pharisees of casting out demons by the force of Beelzebnb — ruler of demons — he replies only with an attempt to baffle them with apparently logical formulas (Mt. 12:24-27).

But perhaps the most interesting and compelling evidence is comparative. Assuming that Jesus was in some way a historical person who did things roughly answering to some of the accounts given in the Gospels, what kind of man would he have been? He fits perfectly the profile of a magician, of his time and place. If Jesus *was* a magician are there any corollaries to his magical activities elsewhere in the cultures of his exact time and region? Yes, there is much of it in the form of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri.(14) Smith deals with this evidence in great detail. What emerges is a clear picture of a Hellenized Jewish magician who, among other things, claimed to be the a son of a god, used verbal magical formulas to work miracles, and who did not send spirits or demons to do his work but who contained or absorbed a divine spirit and exerted it directly.

Several papyri outline magical procedures for obtaining a spirit in order to become a son of a god. One of these (PGM I:42-195)(15) says that the magician shonld purify himself, go onto a lofty roof and, among other things, blindfold himself with a "black Isis band." At one point in the ritual the band is removed and a "falcon will fly down" and drop a stone as a first sign of the manifestation of the spirit in the magician. This spirit, or *daimon*, becomes identified with the magician from an outsider's viewpoint so the magician in the words of the papyrus "will be worshipped as a god since [he has] a god as a friend." Another papyrus (PGM IV:154-221) reads in part:

> ... there will be this sign of divine encounter, but you, armed by having this magical soul, be not alarmed. For a sea falcon flies down and strikes yon on the body with its wings, signifying this: that you should arise. But as for you, rise up and clothe yourself with white garments and burn on an earthen censer uncut incense in grains while saying this:

'I have been attached to your holy form.
I have been given power by your holy name.
I have acquired your emanation of the goods.
Lord, god of gods, master, daimon.

...

Having done this, return as lord of a godlike nature which is accomplished though this divine encounter.(16)

The parallel between these magical rituals and the story of the baptism of Jesus (Mk. 1: 9-11) in which he receives a "holy spirit" which appears as a dove flying down from heaven is remarkable. After this event he is able to perform magical feats by just "saying the word," i.e. some magical formula or "*mantra.*"

A sorcerer who "had" a spirit or daimon might be called in the Greek of that day a *magos* (pl. *magoi*)— and was often considered a "divine man." Such a *magos* was more than a mere *goês*, or sorcerer, who cold only command spirits outside himself. In Jesus' own time some apparently thought that he had obtained the spirit of the executed John the Baptist— and worked magic with it. But it is the "holy spirit"— that of a god who Jesus the man seems to have become — which is the true agent of his miracles.

A *magos* — becanse of his "divine nature" — can cause changes with his "word" (or directed conscious will) alone. The papyri are full of verbal magical formulas, such as *ablanathanalba*, by which the *magos* may work his will. There is even one such word recorded in the Gospel of Mark (5:41) where Jesns heals a little girl with the (supposedly Aramaic) phrase *talitha koumi.*

For each of the miracles of Jesus a parallel can be found in the magical literature of his day. Even the magical power of his own name was enhanced upon his death— for magic worked with the spirit (or "name") of an executed criminal was believed to be of special power. This is, of course, further bolstered by the knowledge that Jesus exhorted his followers to do this, saying that he would be in them always (e.g. Jn. 14:23; 15:4-9; Mt. 18:20; 28:20).

Jesus was a deified man— just as every *magos* is. Among many magicians of the time deification — and immortalization — was the highest goal of the art and practice of *mageia* (magic). Jesus' own declarations of his divinity correspond with the words from magical papyri in which the magician declares his divine qualities:

Jn. 10:36 "I am the Son of God."
PGM IV:535 "I am the Son..."
DMP XX:33: "I am the Son of the living God."

Jn. 6:51 "I am ... the one come from heaven."
PGM IV:1018 "I am the one come forth from heaven."

Jn. 14:6 "I am ... the truth..."
PGM V:148 "I am the truth"(17)

But was Jesus a master of the left-hand path? It would appear that from the most objective evidence and methods of investigation — filtering out the often self-serving redactions and interpretations of his followers — that the man and magos Jesus was a practitioner of the left-hand path. He was an antinomian, preaching an abrogation of the established Jewish Law and was thought to be "Satanic" by his contemporary rivals and critics (charges he did not directly deny). He taught the "salvation" of the individual— while practicing the *deification* of his own individual self. That so much of this comes through the deliberate (and successful) attempt to transform his teachings into a right-hand path doctrine is remarkable.

The parallels between Jesus and Simon Magus also include the fact that Jesus (despite what were perhaps later attempts to gloss over the circumstance) had as his consort a prostitute, Mary Magdelene. This seems to be an essential component in the myth of the *magus*.(18)

In the final analysis, however, because Christianity as an institution was founded and promoted by men such as Saul/Paul (who was an avid persecutor of early followers of Jesus and who was never taught by the "master") and Jesus' own brother James (who rejected his brother as insane in his own lifetime) we can not trust that any of the possible left-hand path teachings of Jesus survived intact. If Jesus was lord of the left-hand path, his teachings were at once betrayed by a group of his followers so that now no more of his true doctrines survive than do those of Apollonins of Tyana or Simon Magus. To risk stating the painfully obvious: All organized forms of orthodox Christianity — eastern or western, Catholic or Protestant — are monuments of right-hand path intolerance and hatred of the individual spirit.

— Islam and the Left-Hand Path —

In the southern — or middle eastern — tradition no other system of thought more perfectly embodies the ideals of the right-hand path than orthodox *Islam*. The very word means submission— submission to the laws of Allah. Philosophically Islam is the most radically monotheistic of the religions of the middle east. At the same time this radical theology actually allowed for a great deal of free thought *outside* the confines of the religious life— this is why the Muslims of Persia, Egypt and Moorish Spain were able to become such great collectors and interpreters of Hellenic philosophy and innovators in many philosophical and scientific areas.(19) The Muslims collected and read the works of Plato, Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists at a time when such works were considered to be pure diabolism in ecclesiastical circles in the Christian west.

Historically Islam is another cult form inspired by the Judaic or Hebrew mythology. It was founded by Mohammed (570-632 CE) who spread his form of religion by military conquest— Holy War (Ar. *jihad*). By ten years after the Prophet's death Islamic armies had conquered Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and much of Iran (Persia). By a century after Mohammed's death the Moors were moving into France from Spain which had already fallen into their hands. They were only stopped at the battle of Tours in 732 by Charles Martel ("the Hammer"). But they continued to occupy the Iberian peninsula for 800 more years.

The root essence of Islam lies in the formula known as the *shadah*: "There is no god but Allah— and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah." Allah is derived from a common Semitic name for god we also find in Hebrew *El*. The Arabic form comes from *al-Ilah* "The God." Submission to this creed and to the laws outlined in Mohammed's book, the *Qur'an* or *Koran* ("the Recitation") is the essence of Islam.

However, the culture of Islam often allows for certain unexpected irregularities. Once a man's outer religions obligations are met in accordance with the rule of custom, he may be free— if only *secretly* — to pursue philosophical or magical interests liberated from moral restrictions. This type of pursuit is most often carried out in certain heterodox sects or brotherhoods. The main type of such sects are known as the Sufis. Within the context of Sufism characteristics of the left-hand path are often developed. Two other Islamic sects which attract some attention in discussions of the left-hand path are the Ishmailis (or Hashashin) and the Yezidis.

Before exploring these sects it would be helpful to understand the uniquely Islamic view of Shaitan (Satan) or Iblis as he is also known. The name Iblis is derived from the Greek word *diabolus*. In Islamic mythology Iblis refnses to bow down before Adam (humanity) as all Allah's other angels had done when commanded to do so (*Qur'an* II:34). It is for this transgression or rebellion that Shaitan is punished with rejection.

One Sufistic school, founded by Ibn Arabi has another interpretation of why Iblis would not bow down. They say that Iblis represents the Imagination which would not prostrate itself to the Intellect. "Imagination ... both dissipates and concentrates the faculty of remembrance and seduces both to 'sin and rebellion' and to the vision of the divine-in-things."(20)

The term Sufi is used to describe a number of mystical sects within Islam. Sufism is an Islamic synthesis of mystical teachings often influenced by Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism and other religious sects. However, it contains many original features based on Islamic and native Arabic or Persian ideas. Solid evidence for the Sufi movement dates from around 800 and continues as a viable part of Islamic culture today. It appears likely that these tendencies in Islam are largely the result of original Persian or Iranian influence. One tradition holds that its ultimate root is to be found with the personality of Salman al-Farisi, Mohammed's Persian barber who lived in the Prophet's house. If there are left-hand path characteristics to be found anywhere in the philosophically right-hand path tradition of Islam, it should be in Sufism. Indeed there are important fleeting glimpses of sophisticated left-hand path ideas in these sects.

To some Sufis Iblis is seen as a manifestation of Allah's majesty. They say that he refused to snbmit to the God's command because he was totally focused on the Absolute and would not dilute that focus by worshipping anything else.

Islamic thought again brings up the topic of the dual heritage of the left-hand path— the carnal and the intellectual. A mystical view is that Iblis is the carnal soul (nafs):

> "The carnal soul and Satan have been one from the first,
> And both have envied and been an enemy of Adam."(21)

Iblis is said to have a special kind of link to the Absolute. This is due to the idea that he is the first model for the separate "I-consciousness" independent of the Absolute. So in a way, Iblis disobeyed Allah for the sake of love and for the sake of his loyalty to his One Beloved (the Absolute). He is cursed and punished for his disobedience— but even in this he takes satisfaction at being separated out for unique treatment by the Absolute. The parallel between this and the psycho-cosmology of the Gnostic magus is obvious.

One Sufi who was executed for his thoughts in 1131, Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani, spoke of those who have a special affinity for Iblis as "the separated ones." Those who thrive in a state separate from Allah. Wilson writes:

> Ayn al-Qozat implies that separation-in-love is in some sense superior to union-in-love, because the former is a dynamic condition and the latter a static one. Iblis is not only the paragon of separated ones, he also causes this condition in human lovers— and although some experience this as "evil," the Sufi knows that it is necessary, and even good.(22)

Aleister Crowley, or his "Holy Guardian Angel," will echo some of these sentiments in *The Book of the Law* (I:29) wherein Nuit says: "For I am divided for love's/ sake, for the chance of union."

Al-Qozat goes to develop the concept of Iblis as the guardian of an inner chamber of divinity wherein there is a Black Light— a realm beyond all duality. It is "darkness, but it is light just the same."(23) Al-Qozat declares "... hear the word of God: 'Praise be to God, who has created the heavens and the earth and has established darkness and light' (*Qur'an* VI:1) How can black be complete without white or white without black be complete? It cannot be so."(24)

To some Sufis the figure of Iblis becomes a secret exemplary model. One rather notorious group, the *Malamatiya* (from Ar. *malama*, blame) sect practiced antinomianism reminiscent of the Ophite or Barbelo-Gnostic sects. Members of this sect believed that their

nearness to a divine state was proven by the level of contempt shown to them by normal humanity. They totally neglected religious laws and regularly committed sinful acts.(25)

One of the earliest Sufi practitioners whose ideas bordered on the left-hand path was Abu-Yazid of Persia (d. 875). He came to realize that God was the equivalent of his own soul. He wrote: "Glory to Me! How great is my Majesty!" Technically he was committing the intellectual sin of "incarnationalism" (Ar. *hulul*) by claiming to be God (or a god) incarnate. This seems to be a general tendency in Sufistic beliefs. Again we are reminded of the Gnostic sects where a practitioner could exclaim after some stage : "I am Christ!"(26)

Al-Junaid (d. 910) developed the idea that man's separate existence from God is a result of God's own will. However, God tries to "overcome" this separateness by pouring out the fullness of his own Being. This Sufi used the imagery of erotic love to articulate his theology of human separateness from God. The lover yearns for union but takes intense joy in the suffering caused by the separation.(27)

The most radical of the early Sufis, and a student of al-Junaid, actually identified himself as a god, or perhaps *logos* incarnate. This was Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) who equated himself with the *logos* of Truth. He wrote in his *Kitab al-Tawasin* (51):(28)

> If ye do not recognize God, at least recognize His signs. I am that sign, I am the Creative Truth (*ana l-haqq*), because through the Truth I am a truth eternally. My friends and teachers are Iblis and Pharaoh. Iblis was threatened with Hell-fire, yet he did not recant. Pharaoh was drowned in the sea, yet he did not recant, for he would not acknowledge anything between him and God. And I, though I am killed and crucified, and though my hands and feet are cut off— I do not recant.(29)

For writing these words al-Hallaj was condemned to die having committed the gross blasphemy of equating himself with (a) god— and what was worse by using the model of Jesus Christ for doing so. For this, his mode of execution was that of his hero— crucifixion. Al-Hallaj is said to have reached a "Permanence of Self in the Real" (Ar. *baqa'*) by which he was able to ascend to Paradise after his martyrdom.(30)

The Assassins and the Old Man of the Mountain

Another faction with left-hand path implications is the Ishmaili sect within Shi'a Islam of Persia. The Ishmailis are also known to history as the Hashashin, or "Assassins." This sect has its origins in 1074 when the Persian Hasan-i Sabbah was initiated into Ishmailism in Cairo. In 1094 he moved his headquarters to a mountain fortress in Persia called the Alamut, or "Eagle's Nest." This effected a division in the sect into two branches, the oriental branch with its headquarters at Alamut in Persia and the occidentals in Egypt and Yemen.(31) It was the *shaikh* or "elder" of the fortress of Alamut — the so-called Old Man of the Mountain — about whom Marco Polo reported in his book recounting his journey to the east.(32)

Hasan-i Sabbah developed and taught a system of spiritual hermeneutics called in Arabic *ta'wil*: "to take something back to its source or deepest significance." *Ta'wil* is used to penetrate beyond the exoteric limitations of the Law (*shariah*) and Path (*tariqah*) of religion to arrive at the esoteric Reality (*haqiqah*) behind the outer forms.(Wilson 1988, p. 38) Hasan-i Sabbah declared: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." (A phrase that has had immense literary and artistic impact today throngh William Burroughs and the modern movement called "Discordianism."

In 1162 Hasan II (son of Hasan-i Sabbah) became the *shaikh* of Alamnt. On 17 Ramazan (8 August) 1164 he declared the *Qiyamat*— the Great Resurrection. In doing this he declared: "The chains of the Law are broken!" The inhabitants of the Eagle's Nest were free of obligations of Islamic religious laws and a perpetual holiday was declared. Hasan II

can be said to have realized the "Immam-of-his-own-being" and he then invited all his followers to participate in this.(33) With the *Qiyamat* Hasan II maintained that the resurrection of the dead in physical bodies was possible *in life*. The Ishmaili initiate "'dies before death' when he comes to realize the separative and alienated aspects of the self, the ego-as-programmed-illusion. He is 'reborn' in consciousness but he is reborn in the body, as an individual, the 'soul-at-peace.'"(34) In 1166 Hasan II was murdered.

It seems likely that Hasan II took his followers too far too fast. He had perhaps reached the spiritual "station" called Permanence (Ar. *baqa'*), but his doctrine of *Qiyamat* had been developed over several years through the gradual stages of Ishmaili initiation and based on the practice of *ta'wil*. But the stage that immediately precedes Permanence is said to be Annihilation (Ar. *fana'*).(35) This annihilation is not an end in itself, which may be true in the right-hand path, but is a phase to be passed through before individual permanence is possible. Hasan II tried to offer this intoxicated state of permanence to his followers in a direct and simple form, which they did not seem ready to accept or be able to achieve. From the left-hand path perspective, he attempted to transform a school of the intellectual, gradual Transcendental Path, into one of the sensory, immediate Lesser Path over night. Ultimately it did not work for all of the followers.

The Ishmailis came to believe that their leader or *Imam* was divine, and following 1164, the time of *Qiyamat*, many of them maintained the possibility of a "pure spiritual Islam, freed of any legalistic spirit, of all servitude to the Law."(36) Far from submitting to "God's will," in the final state of Ishmaili initiation (the IX^{o}) "every vestige of dogmatic religion has been practically cast aside, and the initiate is become a philosopher pure and simple, free to adopt such system or admixture as may be most to his taste."(37)

In 1251 the fortress At Alamut was captured and destroyed by the Mongols, and the vast library there was burned. Afterward the Ishmailis found refuge in various Sufi sects.(38) In the 19th century the Ishmailis re-emerged under the spiritual leadership of the Aga Khans, and are today a wealthy sect headquartered in India.(39)

The Yezidi Devil Worshippers

To call the Yezidis an Islamic sect may or may not be correct. But it is perhaps within the cultural milieu of Islam that it makes most sense to discuss them. Also to call them "devil worshippers" — which has so often been done(40) — may or may not be correct. But certainly they have been called this so much that a discussion of their beliefs in the left-hand path context can not go unrecorded.

The Yezidis are a Kurdish people. Kurdish is a dialect of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Thus they are not part of the general Arabic population surrounding them in their homeland in and around the valley of Lalish near the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the northern part of modern Iraq. Evidence for the Yezidi religion dates only from the 14th century. Its peculiar lore may be the result of ancient pre-Islamic tenets being grafted into Islamic religious terminology, or it may constitute an original creation.

Historically the Yezidis trace the origin of their faith back to *shaikh* Adi ibn Musafir who came to the valley of Lalish from the valley of Baalbek in Lebanon by way of Baghdad. He was in Baghdad around 1100 where he was associated with various Sufis, including Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani. Among the Kurds of Lalish he founded an order which was outwardly orthodox, but which secretly venerated Melek Taus— the Iblis of al-Hallaj.

The word *Yezidi* is probably derived from the Persian word *yaz(a)d-*, "supreme being" which is part of the Zoroastrian terminology. The term was used by the Shi'ite Muslims of Persia as a term of insult— essentially meaning to them "heathen" or "infidel."(41)

In Yezidi doctrine the First Cause. or God (*Khuda*) created the cosmos through the agency of seven angels. The first among these, Azaziel or Asa'el, refused to bow down before Adam (man) who had been created directly by Khuda alone. One of the reasons for his refusal, by the way may be that Azaziel was formed of fire, while Adam was formed

from clay, and the angel refused to bow to a lower being.(42) However, Khuda has subsequently forgiven Azaziel— who is therefore not the spirit of evil the uninitiated make him out to be. The Yezidis consider the name Shaitan (Satan) as an insult to Azaziel and refuse to use the term— and if it is used by others in their presence retribntion is demanded.

The name Azaziel is also rarely heard among them. It has been largely replaced by a cognomen: Melek Taus— the Peacock Angel. The Yezidis trust in Melek Taus and ask for his special knowledge and protection. They believe that Judgment Day is in the remote future and that the faithful live on through cycles of reincarnation (a belief also shared with the Ishmailis and Druzes). To the Yezidis evil is a fact of *natural* life and not the work of a supernatural being. Melek Taus' role in the "fall" of man is not that of a tempter— but he is revered as the brave provider of knowledge needed by mankind to survive.

One of the Yezidi holy books called the *Kitab el-Aswad* is Arabic or the *Mas'haf Rish* in Kurdish (both meaning "Black Book") tells that God created Adam (*only* the male) and placed him in Paradise but forbids him to eat of *wheat.* After a hundred years Melek Taus asks God why Adam has not increased or multiplied. God replied by giving to the Peacock Angel administrative authority in the world. Melek Taus then instructs Adam to go against God's prohibition and eat of the grain. The Peacock Angel then *drives* Adam out of paradise. Only later was woman created (from under Adam's left armpit), and mankind is able to increase.(43) Here the positive evolutionary role of Melek Taus is clear.

How this positive evolutionary role is reflected in the spiritual lives of individuals is demonstrated by the words of a poem by *shaikh* Adi himself:

> I am Adi of Shams, son of Musafir.
> ...
> In the secret of my knowledge there is no god but me...
> Praise be to myself, and all things are of my will.
> And the universe is lighted by some of my gifts.

With the Yezidis and Ishmailis, as with so many of the other apparently left-hand path traditions, the essentially left-handed goal — immortal independent existence of the self in a quasi-divine state — is not clear except at the highest levels of initiation or at the leadership level. It is probably for this reason that the leaders and past leaders of the sects seem to be "worshipped." Actually they serve as pioneering spirits who have walked the path before the aspirant and thus serve as exemplary models. It is interesting to note that one of the shrines, or actual images of the Peacock Angel (*sanjak*), in the Yezidi region is said to be dedicated to Mansur al-Hallaj— the Persian Sufi and apparent practitioner of the left-hand path executed in 922.(44)

It seems that the Yezidi tradition is the result of a syncretism of indigenous Kurdish beliefs (probably non-Zoroastrian Iranian sects), Iranian dualism, *shaikh* Adi's Sufistic teachings, Al-Hallaj's interpretation of Iblis, and perhaps Nestorian Christianity.(45) This synthesis may, however, only be a superficial one and perhaps the values and structures underlying Yezidi belief remain essentially ancient Kurdish ways. This is even alluded to in another of the Yezidi holy books, the *Kitab al-Jilwa* (IV): "The scriptures of strangers are accepted by me (Melek Taus) in so far as they accord with my ordinances and run not counter to them ..."(46)

It is curious to note that virtually all of the left-hand path traits present in the Islamic cultural stream seem to flow ultimately from the Iranian world— whether it is the heretical Sufis, the Ishmailis, or even the Kurdish Yezidis. I would speculate that the reason for this is that the left-hand path ideas were common— even if eternally controversial — in the pre-Islamic world and that these yearnings of the human spirit to attain to an independent, immortal and awakened state could not be stamped out entirely— even by the vigorously right-hand path tradition of the way of "submission."

Notes for Chapter 4

(1) Tacitus, *The Histories*. trans. K. Wellesley. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 274.

(2) Kurt Rudolf, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 275-366 and Benjamin Walker, *Gnosticism* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press, 1982), pp. 133-160,

(3) See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963, 2nd ed.), pp. 103-111; Rudolf, *Gnosis*, pp. 294-298 and Walker, *Gnosticism*, pp. 136-139.

(4) See James M Robinson, ed.. *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), pp. 362-367.

(5) Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, p. 111)

(6) Walker, *Gnosticism*, p. 138.

(7) Walker, *Gnosticism*, p. 138-142 and Rudolf, *Gnosis*, pp. 298; 309 ff.

(8) Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, p. 105.

(9) Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, p. 110.

(10) On the development of St. Augustine's thought, see Mircea Eliade *History of Religious Ideas* (Chicagor: University of Chicago Press, 1985), vol III, pp. 38-50.

(11) On the concept of "binaric" see Anton LaVey, "Binaric, or Don't Try to Teach a Pig to Sing — It Wastes Your Time and Annoys the Pig," *Cloven Hoof* (121) XX:3 (1987), 1-2.

(12) Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 45-67.

(13) Smith, *Jesus*, p. 62)

(14) The magical texts of the papyri have been translated by Hans Dieter Betz, ed, *The Greek Magical : Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), vol I, and the orignal Greek (with a German translation) is presented by Karl Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Stuttgart: Teubner), 1973-74, 2 vols., 2nd ed.

(15) Betz, *Papyri*, pp. 4-5.

(16) Betz, *Papyri*, pp. 41-42.

(17) Smith, *Jesus*, pp. 125-126.

(18) Smith, *Jesus*, p. 9.

(19) Eliade, *History*, vol. III, pp. 116-151.

(20) Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Iblis, the Black Light." *Gnosis* 14 (Winter: 1990), p. 46.

(21) Javad, Nurbakhsh, *The Great Satan "Eblis."* London: (Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1986), p. 67.

(22) Wilson, "Iblis," p. 45.

(23) Wilson, "Iblis," p. 45.

(24) Wilson, "Iblis," p. 45.

(25) A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 70)

(26) Walker, *Gnosticism*, p. 128.

(27) Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 58.

(28) Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 60.

(29) Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 60.

(30) Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Scandal: Essays in Islamic Heresy* (New York: Autonomedia, 1988), p. 9.

(31) Eliade *History*, vol. III, pp. 119-120.

(32) Marco Polo. *The Travels*, (London: Penguin, 1958), pp. 70-73.

(33) Wilson *Scandal*, p. 38.

(34) Wilson *Scandal*, p. 40.

(35) Wilson *Scandal*, p. 45.

(36) Eliade *History*, vol. III, p. 120.

(37) Edward Burman, *The Assassins: Holy Killers of Islam* (Wellingborough, UK: Crucible, 1987), p. 61.

(38) Eliade *History*, vol. III, p. 120.

(39) Burman, *The Assassins*, p. 174ff.

(40) For example by Arkon Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1961), pp. 141-155 and Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals* (New York: Avon, 1972), pp. 151-172.

(41) John S. Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival* (London: KPI, 1987), p. 31.

(42) Wilson, "Iblis," p. 43.

(43) See the *Black Book*, translated by Guest, *Yezidis*, p. 203.

(44) Guest, *Yezidis*, pp. 40-41 and Wilson, "Iblis," p. 45.

(45) Walker, *Gnosticism*, pp. 74-75.

(46) Guest, *Yezidis*, p. 201-202.

Chapter 5
The Path of Satan

The Left-Hand Path in the Western Middle Ages 500-1500

In any given culture, the beginning of the medieval period may be marked from the time it officially accepts (by whatever means) the nominal authority of the Christian church. By the time of the advent of the Middle Ages in western Europe the basic church dogmas outlined by St. Augustine had become the standard of orthodoxy. However, the swarm of heterodox teachings, and even organized sects, remained unceasing until the present day. The orthodox call heterodox doctrines "heresies"— and as often as not equate them with the work of the Devil. At the same time the "heretics" almost without exception conceive of themselves as true Christians who champion the true teachings of Jesus against the orthodox forces— which are sometimes themselves characterized as being diabolical. For the most part, with some rare exceptions, the story of medieval spiritual dissent and warfare is one internal to the right-hand path.

Augustine's dogmas of the Trinity, Original Sin, Free-Will and Grace became litmns tests for other doctrines. The seeds of many heterodox movements were planted early.

Arius (256-336), a priest in Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Jesus Christ was not god himself but a man who had become god-like. This teaching was condemned as heretical because it denied the dogma of the Trinity— that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are/is co-eternal and co-equal. This Christological controversy perhaps ultimately stems from two Greek words used to describe Christ *theotetos*, having the substance of god, and *theomorphos*, being akin to god. In actuality, Arius was trying to preserve the purity and simplicity of monotheism in his teaching. The orthodox elevation of Jesus to the level of God the Father did two things. It created a kind of duotheism (or tritheism) and it made Jesus ever more remote from humanity. As this happened it becanie increasingly difficnlt for the Christian believer to see him as an exemplary model for his own salvation, and at the same time it increased the power and necessity of the institutionalized Church in the spiritual life of the individual. In the Middle Ages things as apparently irrelevant to modern minds as Christology had a *direct* effect on the social, political, economic and, obviously, spiritual life of each individual.

Another important heretical thinker was Pelagius (died around 420) who taught that every human was born free of original sin and that all individuals were responsible for their own moral actions. Pelagius was of Celtic heritage (either Irish or Britonic) and was most interested in the improvement of the moral practice of Christianity. Even in this early period Christian moral practice was lax because there were always ways to shirk moral responsibility. Augustine taught that moral behavior was a sign of God's grace, while it might be held that immoral behavior was somehow "caused" by the Devil— in either instance the individual is *not responsible*. Pelagius was condemned by the church and died in an unknown place in the Middle East.

Certainly neither Arius or Pelagius could be called practitioners of the left-hand path. However, the main points of their teachings— the heroic view of Christ as an exemplary mythic model for self-development, the basic *freedom* of human beings and their *responsibility* for their own actions — are elements of any coherent left-hand path philosophy.

The strongest exponents of this early form of Christian heresy were the various East Germanic tribes (Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, etc.) who converted to this Arian form of the faith. It is probably also true that their Gothic Christianity was not unmixed with elements of their native Germanic religion.(1) Nevertheless this form of Christianity — linked as it was with the Goths — was annihilated in a series of wars waged on the Goths by the Pope and various secular kings in the 6th through 8th centuries.

Gnosticism was the root of the most powerful challenge to orthodoxy in the later Middle Ages. This branch of Gnosticism, however, had its direct root in the doctrines of Mani (216-277) a Persian holy man who was raised in the Judeo-Christian sect of the Elchasaites. In 240 he broke with the sect and founded his own movement as a result of messages he received from the "King of the Paradise of Light." Manicheanism is a synthesis of Iranian Gnostic thought with Judeo-Christian mythology and certain Buddhist teachings.

Mani taught that there are two principles — light and darkness, and three great epoches of cosmic history: a time when light was separate from darkness, this time in which the darkness attacks the light, and a coming time in which the darkness will again be separated from the light. A person can be saved from the world of darkness — or flesh — only through *knowledge* (*gnosis*) of this reality.(2)

From thess Persian, Manichean, origins sprang many heretical sects in western Europe. Some of these were highly ascetic — such as the Cathars, while others went in the libertine direction — such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Indeed these are the same tendencies present in all Gnostic movements.

The church fought dissenters and protesters throughout the Middle Ages. Virtually all of those it oppressed, however, were also (and usually more aware) followers of the right-hand path. After the success of one of these group's movements — the Protestant Reformation begun by the German priest Martin Luther — interest in the possibilities of secret underground diabolical movements increased. This was true both in the Protestant north as well as the Catholic south.

In the first half of the Middle Ages — until about 1200 — the religious intolerance of the church was largely reserved for pagans (peoples adhering to their national native traditions) and national Christian religions (such as Gothic Arianism). These were usually opposed in open warfare in an alliance between the Pope and relevant secular authorities— this most often being the French king or the Holy Roman Emperor.

A foretaste of what was to come occurred in 385 when Pricillian was executed in Trier for holding heretical beliefs. But the institutionalized persecution of heretics, witches, magicians and the like did not begin in ernest until around 1200. By this time all overt paganism in Europe had been stamped out— so the forces of intolerance and spiritual totalitarianism *turned inward* to begin the persecution of those who professed to be Christians but who did not meet orthodox standards of belief.

Pope Innocent III in a bull of 1199 formally established the church-wide institution of the Inquisition. By 1273 Pope Gregory IX appointed the Dominican Order as the official Inquisitorial body. This was later modified to include the Franciscans.

The level of institutionalized violence and hatred embodied in the Inquisition has rarely been equalled in the course of human history. Its record is too well known, and too vile, to repeat here in any detail.(3) Our purpose in this book is not to recount the history of *evil*— for if such were the case surely the history of the left-hand path would make a poorer subject than the history of the forces of institutionalized orthodoxy— Christian, Muslim, Communist, or National Socialist. But to appreciate the level of resistance faced by spiritual

dissenters of all sorts— including practitioners of the left-hand path — the nature of the forces bent on their destruction is important to remember.

It is also noteworthy that the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church was (or *is* for the institution still exists under the name "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith") not the only body in Christendom which engaged in these intolerant and spiritually totalitarian practices. "Freelancing" Protestant witch-hunters or witch-finders along with local Protestant clergy and secular authorities persecuted those thought to be in league with the Devil no less vigorously than the Catholics had done.

Although heretics of all kinds were considered to be at least indirectly in league with the Devil, it was not until the 16th and 17th centuries that widespread "satanism" or "witchcraft" was suggested by the forces of orthodoxy (Protestant or Catholic). Not surprisingly this is a time when we also find little in the way of true left-hand path practice.

The whole "witchcraft scare" of the 1500-1600s seems to have been for the most part a malicious (and profitable) fantasy on the part of churchmen. In a brilliant study, Norman Cohn(4) has shown how later Christians used earlier Roman descriptions of what they thought occurred at Christian *agapê* feasts and modified the descriptions over time to suit any heretical group churchmen wished to slander.

Two examples of the process should be sufficient to illustrate the point. Concerning what Romans think Christians do in their services, Minucius Felix (active at the end of the 2nd century CE) wrote:

> A child ... is set before the would-be novice. The novice stabs the child to death ... Then ... they hungrily drink the child's blood, and compete with one another as they divide his limbs. Through this victim they are bound together; and the fact that they all share this knowledge of the crime pledges them all to silence.
>
> On the feast-day they foregather with all their children, sisters, mothers, people of either sex and all ages. When the company is all aglow from feasting, and impure lust has been set afire by drunkenness, ... they twine the bonds of unnameable passion as chance decides. And so all alike are incestuous, if not always in deed at least by complicity ... Precisely the secrecy of this evil religion proves that all these things, or practically all, are true.(5)

Some eight centuries later, around 1050, a Greek philosopher Michael Psellos, wrote a dialog *On the Operation of Demons* containing what the orthodox Christians thought of the rites of the Bogomil heretics:

> They bring ... young girls whom they have initiated into their rites ... and throw themselves lasciviously on the girls; each one on whomever first falls into his hands, no matter whether she be his sister, his daughter or his mother ... When this rite has been completed, each goes home; and after waiting nine months until the time has come for the unnatural children of such unnatural seed to be born, they come together ... on the third day after the birth, they tear the miserable babies from their mother's arms. They cut their tender flesh all over with sharp knives and catch the stream of blood in basins. They throw the babies, still breathing and gasping, into the fire to be burned to ashes. After which they mix the ashes with the blood in the basins to make an abominable drink ... (6)

Let it suffice to say that the latter description is no more likely to be true than the former. What is remarkable is that such descriptions could still be heard on television "news" programs in the 1980s and 1990s— including stories about "breeders" and infants

being burned and devoured (so there was no "evidence" for the crime). See Appendix A on the "Urban Legend of Satanicism."

It is certain that we would learn little concerning any genuine left-hand path schools, traditions or philosophies by relying on medieval Christian descriptions of the activities of their adversaries— real or imagined. However, the *symbols* engendered during this period would serve to stir the rebellious imaginations of antinomian Romantics in the late 18th to 20th century.

The Christian Heretics

The Dualists

Even when we look to those who spiritually rebelled against the authority of the church during the Middle Ages we find mostly only other right-hand path practitioners.

The great dualistic heresies — which have been referred to as being "Satanic" by orthodox theologians — had few left-hand path tendencies. As can be seen from the "learned" description of their activities reported by Psellos, the orthodox believers really had no idea what the Bogomils or Cathars believed— and they were not interested in knowing. The orthodox wanted only their extermination. This extermination could only be completed by means of open warfare on the sects involved. This was the so-called Albegensian Crusade (1207-1221). Even after that it took until about 1330 to wipe out the last vestige of the Cathar movement in Europe.

What did these "vile heretics" teach?

Derived ultimately from the Manichean tradition (probably in the "Paulician" or "Messalian" forms in Asia Minor, Bogomilism was founded around 950 by a village priest in Bulgaria calling himself *Bogomil*, "Beloved of God."

Bogomil preached that God — Bog — had two sons: Satanel and Christ. Satanel rebelled in heaven and caused one third of all the angels to follow him. As a result of the rebellion Satanel created the material universe— of which he is god. Bogomil equated, as do most Gnostics, the Jewish God of the Old Testament with Satanel.

As a result, Bogomil believed all flesh, and material things of all sorts, to be evil tricks of Satanel. The orthodox priesthood and its sacraments and miracles — all works through matter— were thus held to be manifestations of evil.

The ultimate aim of the Bogomil believer was to unite with Christ— the good god. To do this he or she must lead an ascetic lifestyle, be vegetarian, not indulge in wine, sex, marriage or procreation. It is interesting to note that the English term bugger, meaning "Sodomy, anal or oral intercourse" is derived from *Bulgarus*, Bulgar. This is because the Bogomil heresy, with its prohabition against procreation, was so widespread among these people in the Middle Ages they became identified with such practices!

Most of the propaganda written against them, a sample of which appears above) is useless as evidence for what they really believed because it seems to be merely repetitions of charges made indiscriminately against any and all whom the church wished to slander and destroy.

The Bogomils were the object of frequent persecutions by the orthodox authorities. This in part caused them to send missions north of the Balkans and the west into Italy, France and western Germany, where they developed into various movements, e.g. the Cathars or Albegensians and Waldensians.(7) By the beginning of the 14th century the Bogomils were effectively suppressed as an open religion, and with the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in the late 14th century the religion disappeared. Most Bogomils eventually converted to Islam.(8)

The Cathars had a theology and cosmology almost identical to that of the Bogomils. However, they were much more successful in organizing themselves, especially in southern France or Provence.

Probably the chief reason for Cathar popularity in Europe was the widespread and thorough corruption of the Roman Catholic institutious. Catholic priests lived in carnal luxury. Many were married or simply lived together with concubines, they ran taverns and

charged extra fees for all their religious services. This latter practice was necessitated by the need of priests to pay off their patrons within the church who arranged for their appointments to office. The Cathars, on the other hand, seem to have been devoutly and *radically* spiritual in all that they did.

Cathar internal structure was simple. After a long apprenticeship an adept entered the sect by means of a rite called the *convenza*. The second and last level of initiation was celebrated in a rite called the *consolamentum* after which the initiate is called a "Perfect." These were the true *Cathari* — "Purified Ones." (*Catharus* comes from the Greek *katharos*, pure.)

After one had become a Perfect it was expected that one would sin no more. Although the Cathars were lenient on the laity— their standards of morality at the "Perfect" level were so harsh that many practiced the *endura* — allowing themselves to starve to death — after the *consolamentum* rite. This was done in order that they might ascend into the realm of light without sin. For the Cathars there was no Hell below this world— this world of flesh and matter was the prison of the spirit and the true Inferno. Their ideal was to set into motion a process which would end the existence of humanity in this world, propelling it into a realm of pure spirit.

Although Manicheans, Bogomils and Cathars would often be referred to as "Satanic" by orthodox propagandists it can be seen that they have virtually nothing to do with the left-hand path. From the Cathar point of view the Roman Catholic Church was in reality Satanic. This is the common charge / counter-charge tactic typical of the right-hand path. In the case of the Roman Church it might, however, seem plausible when one reads a study such as *The Bad Popes* by E. R. Chamberlin.

The strict moral dualism of the Manichean kind — or even the implicit and elusive dualism of the orthodox variety — is simply not conducive to a true left-hand path philosophy. Such dualism that does exist as a part of the analysis of the cosmic or human order must be accepted and *utilized* for the evolution of the self into an ever more perfected and god-like being to be true to left-hand path premises.

Pantheistic Free Spirits

Another kind of Christian heresy especially popular in Germany, northern France, the Low Countries and England was the so-called Brethren of the Free Spirit. This movement was present throughout these regions from about the beginning of the 1200s all the way to the end of the 1600s. One of the reasons the movement as a whole could continue beyond the grasp of the Inquisition is that it had no formal structure and the members tended to be both highly intelligent and mobile. Many, however, were burned at the stake for their beliefs. "Spiritual Libertinism" was equally widespread among women and men. The sect often flourished *within* the social context of the wider communities known as the Beghards (men) and Beguines (women).

Their traditions tended to be *oral* and hence original texts are scarce. Three of the most important original sources for Free Spirit thought are *Schwester Katrei*, Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple-Souls*, and a tract by an English "Ranter" (a Free Spirit off-shoot) called *A Single Eye*.(9)

The Brethren of the Free Spirit may indeed be said to belong to the more libertine branch of "Gnostic" thought— just as the Cathars represented an extreme form of the ascetic branch. However, extreme dualism is not a feature of their thought. It is more in keeping with the known facts to call the Free Spirit movement "pantheistic."

On the surface the Spiritual Libertines, as they are also called, would seem to be prime examples of left-hand path thought and practice and be in many ways similar to the left-hand path antinomian tantrics of the east. Norman Cohn says they represent "a system of self-exaltation often amounting to self-deification." If we delve beyond the surface we can see some distinctions that bear emphasis.

The overriding cosmological feature of Free Spirit belief is the realization that "God is all that is" and that "every created thing is divine."(10) These formulas, as well as the essence of their practice point to a Neo-Platonic model of reality as the root of their beliefs. Cohn, however, points out that their teachings seem to stem from the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and John the Scot Erigena— and to have taken no further attempts to homogenize Neo-Platonism into the Christian mainstream of orthodoxy.(11)

Another important influence on their understanding of the world seems to have been supplied — if indirectly — by the visionary Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202).(12) Joachim divided the history of the world into three phases or stages: that of the Father (or Law), of the Son (or Gospel) and of the Holy Spirit. The advent of the Age of the Holy Spirit would usher in a transformation of the world. The first Age was one of fear and servitude, the second of faith and filial submission— but the third Age "would be one of love, joy and freedom, when knowledge of God would be revealed directly in the hearts of all men."(13) The Brethren of the Free Spirit had a similar doctrine in which they held that the Incarnation of the Son (Christ) was being surpassed by the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit in the bodies of the "Spirituals"— the highest initiates of the Free Spirit movement. They could at that point declare: "I am the Holy Spirit!"(14)

The pantheism of the Spiritual Libertines comes to the forefront when we observe their attitudes toward the self of humanity. Cohn concluded that the core of the Free Spirit system hinged on an attitude toward the *self.* The Spiritual Libertine believed he had attained perfection and so was *incapable* of sin. This awareness inevitably led to certain antinomian practices. It became a virtual requirement for the initiate to engage in forbidden acts.(15) In a world in which sexual pleasure was perhaps the greatest of forbidden pleasures, it was only natural for the practices of the Spiritual Libertines to gravitate in this direction. There is evidence for a tradition of "free love" among them— but little to none of public orgies (often ascribed to them by their orthodox enemies).

Those who had realized their unity with the divine considered themselves to have returned to the *Adamite* state of being— free of sin and unashamed. The Free Spirits seem to have practiced ritual nudity as an expression of this realization.

But *how* did the Spiritual Libertines attain to this Adamite state of sinless innocence and immortality? Unfortunately most of the texts that might have been used by the sect were destroyed by the Inquisition. in the fragments of the system which remain, however, a few things are clear.

The first phase of initiation — which may go on for years — involves self-abnegation and self-torture. There is the cultivation of absolute passivity and obedience (sometimes to a "master"). During this phase one is not a true Spiritual Libertine, but the as an apprentice one is being trained to receive the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit. The second phase is the actual transformation into God. At that point one becomes Adamite (or Evite), restored to the original state of being.

The *Mirror of Simple Souls* describes a more detailed process of seven steps of initiation. The first three involve ascetic practices of self-denial and obedience. Levels four and five prepare the way for the state of exultation— one is blinded by the light of love, preparing the way for the recognition of one's own sinfulness at the fifth level. This *experience* of the immense gulf between the self and God allows the light and love of God to sweep into the self. The will of God becomes the will of the self. At the sixth level one becomes a true Free Spirit— the soul is annihilated in the Deity so that there is nothing but God: God = Self. In the seventh and last level the self rejoices permanently in the divine state of being.(16)

The Spiritual Libertine is not just united with God— but becomes identical to God. This identity is furthermore permanent. Because of the evolutionary quality of Free Spirit theology, that is that this phenomenon represents a new stage in the development of deity and humanity. The Free Spirit initiate could claim to be superior to God as understood in texts from previous Ages.(17)

As with many Gnostic sects, the Brethren of the Free Spirit considered this world to be the realm of Hell and punishment. But it was not because it was made of matter, rather it was because of the existence of the gulf between man and God and the presence of man's feelings of guilt and conscience which torment him due to his ignorance of reality. By attaining identity with God, the Free Spirit is liberated from these pangs of conscience— which is tantamount to the liberation from the torments of Hell.(18)

The praxis or spiritual technology of the Free Spirits, like those of so many sects — especially those of the left-hand path — can be dangerous if misunderstood. Spiritual Liberation is not in fact something that just suddenly decides is true and acts upon. It could then be nothing but an excuse for vile or criminal acts. (There is no record of such acts committed by true Free Spirits.) An actual process of self-transformation must be undertaken. This process will invariably involve a long period of discipline and self-denial, of spiritual and physical austerities.

A great deal of the Free Spirit sect's beliefs and practices certainly accord with the general characteristics of the left-hand path. They seem to deify the self, which is dynamic and evolutionary, and direct these efforts toward an immortal existence. Socially they are antinomian, but not particularly so when it comes to religious symbolism. They do not, for example, worship a Devil. There is, however, an important and subtle difference between this and the other schools of the left-hand path. Left-hand philosophies emphasize the *individual* development and immortality. The emphasis is on the deification of the unique and separate self— each individual is "raised" to the level of deity (either in this life-time or in some *post mortem* state). With the Free Spirits the emphasis is quite different. The Holy Spirit descends and incarnates in individual humans filling them individually and collectively with the undifferentiated substance of the Holy Spirit. Although the individuality appears to be preserved, this is only an illusion viewed from the outside. In reality the individual soul has been annihilated and the self identified with the Holy Spirit *in toto*. This is similar to the more orthodox views of the state of *jivanmukti* (individual liberation) in Hinduism. For this reason the Spiritual Libertines must ultimately be excluded from being called practitioners of the left-hand path.

Before leaving this topic I would like to mention that many of the ideas underlying the Free Spirit movement were embodied in — and in turn influenced by — the contemporary German mystical theologians Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Suso and Johannes Tauler.(19) The thought and writings of these and many of the other heretics of the medieval period often find much more sympathetic readings today than the orthodox dogmas of that time or this. The reasons for this will become apparent later.

The Witch Craze

Anton LaVey's Ninth Satanic Statement reads: "Satan is the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept them in business all these years!"(20) This formula is true on many levels. It could be made both with regard to the definitions of the actual Satan (i.e. the carnal or of the principle of isolate intelligence) or with regard to the fictional character of Satan hatched in the lurid imaginations of repressed churchmen, freelance witch-hunters and hysterical members of the peasantry and middle class.

Once the great organized heretical movements were thought to be demolished, or under control, more widespread and deep-level spiritual dissent began to take root. This would bear fruit in the form of the Protestant Reformation. Heretics, whether Gnostic dualists or pantheistic Free Spirits, were always portrayed by churchmen as "Satanic"— which simply meant they *opposed* the official orthodox and exclusively valid "party line" of the church dogmas. By the 16th and 17th centuries there were no great heretical movements or pagan nations to conquer— so the churches turned *downward* to the grass roots of society to find its victims of "evangelism."

It is well known and well documented that the early church "diabolized" the native gods and goddesses of local populations as they converted them to Christianity. Given the

monotheistic theoretical basis of the faith this was not an altogether illegitimate attitude. The pagan deities could not be wiped away overnight— and in fact were never fully eradicated by the church. The lore, myths, rituals and beliefs of Christianity actually had to accommodate themselves in many instances to pagan practices. Striking examples of this are found in everything from the adoptions of the pagan calendar of festivals to popular things such as the Christmas tree, Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. Indeed, pagan forms and practices survived in syncretization with Christian customs both positive and negative. The old ways were canonized or sanctified in some aspects and diabolized in others.

The *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (Index of superstitions and pag practices) is a remarkable document from early medieval Germany (around 740). The list must represent things that were still occurring in central Europe at the time the *Index* was published. The list reads:

1. On the sacrilege at graves and of the dead.
2. On the sacrilege among the buried dead.
3. On the purification festivals in February.
4. On the little houses, i.e. enclosures for the gods.
5. On sacrileges performed in churches.
6. On holy places in the woods, which are called Nimidas. (*Nemeton* = Celtic word for sacred enclosure)
7. On the practices which they carry out on top of rocks.
8. On services to Mercury (= Odin) and Jupiter (= Thor)
9. On sacrifices, which are given to a saint.
10. On amulets and magical bands.
11. On sacrifices at wells.
12. On magical incantations.
13 On auguries by means of birds or horses or from the manure of oxen or from their kidneys.
14. On divination or sortilage.
15. On fire produced by friction from wood, i.e. the Need-fire.
16. On the brains of animals.
17. On the heathen observations of the hearth-fire, or the ignition of these things.
18. On uncertain places, which they hold sacred.
19. On the bundle of straw, which the common folk call St. Mary.
20. On the festivals, which they give to Jupiter (= Thor) or Mercury (= Odin)
21. On the waning of the moon, which they call *Vince Luna.*
22. On tempests and horns and spoons.
23. On the furrows around the yards.
24. On the heathen meeting called *Irias* with torn clothes and shoes.
25. On the belief that they consider every dead person a saint.
26. On idols made from dough.
27. On idols made from cloth.
28. On idols which they carry across fields.
29. On wooden feet or hands according to heathen practice.
30. On the opinion that the hearts of people can be taken away according to the heathens, as women conjure the moon.

This primary evidence show the nature and scope of continuing heathen practice. We can see that none of it is particularly "diabolical" in character— at least not by modern standards.

The shift from heresy to "witchcraft" as a basis for religious persecution was facilitated most of all by the publication of the *Malleus Malificarum* (Hammer of the Witches) in 1486.(21) It became the "witch-hunters' manual" and was reprinted in 14 editions by

1520.(22) From this time to around 1700 was the period of the so-called "witch-craze." Persecutions of people suspected of witchcraft and witch-trials were sporadic throughout Europe during this time. It would die down in one place only to flare up again elsewhere. Even the British colonies were not immune. From the 1640s to the 1690s witches were hung in the colonies of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.(23)

The *Malleus Maleficarum* appears to be largely a work of learned fiction— but a deadly fantasy it is. In it we are told that witches will do four things: renounce the Catholic faith, devote themselves body and soul to evil, offer unbaptized children to the Devil, and engage in sexual orgies. Of course, these were the same literary fictions invented by the Romans and repeated by early churchmen almost 1500 years before the publication of this witch-hunters' manual.

Now the fact that the witch cult did not exist in *reality* was far from a hindrance to the witch-hunters. Since there were no *obvious* suspects— anyone and everyone could be made suspect. This significantly broadened the social scope of the persecutions. Since "evidence" was almost always obtained under torture the witch-finders could suggest just about any wild fantasy and have it affirmed by the delirious object of his cruel occupation.

The Protestant Reformation might have held out a more rational alternative to the Inquisition of the Roman Catholics. But Martin Luther's own obsession with evil and witchcraft, along with the Protestant cultural tendency to allow the laity to engange in witch-hunting activities for God and profit — the "work ethic" meets the Inquisition — made the newly Portestant nothern Europe no less likely to pursecute witches than the conservative Roman Catholic south.

What does all this mean for our purpose of exploring the essence of the left-hand path? Ironically, and perhaps unfortunately, the vast storehouse of western European imagery relating to "Devil worship," witchcraft and "Satanism" is for the most part the invention of the church and witch-hunters. This leads us to conclude that the invented evidence is largely useless for the discovery of any true left-hand path ideas current in this period. To rely on this evidence to discover anything about the Satanism of the period would be somewhat like trying to determine the actual character of modern Satanism from Dennis Wheatly novels and Hollywood horror films.

The Faustian Path

At the end of the medieval period in Germany a whole tradition of magic arose which was associated with the name of Dr. Faustus. The tradition originated at a time contemporary with other great magical thinkers, such as Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) and Paracelsus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), and the spiritual revolutionary Martin Luther (1483-1546). The study of the Faustian tradition is best understood on several levels. There is the actual historical man, probably named Georg Faust(us), the legends which grew up around and attached themselves to his figure after his death (around 1540), and the subsequent complex artistic tradition which actually continues to grow. Without doubt, since the demise of the ancient ways in the north, this man was one of the first new masters of the left-hand path— for through magic and dealing with the Dark Side he managed to become part of myth and legend and has become thereby immortal.

The historical Faust was probably born in or near Knittingen in southwestern Germany in 1480 and died near there at Staufen in 1539 or 1540. He was born with the first name Georg (or Jorg). An early tradition changes the name to Johann(es) for some unknown reason. The name or title "Faust(us)" could either be from the plain German name *Faust* ("fist" or "club") with the addition of the Latin ending *-us*, or it could be a later title from Latin *faustus* ("favored" or "lucky one").(24) (It has been noted that Simon Magus also went by that title in Latin.)(25) In one primary document he also calls himself Sabellicus. This could be a mythic reference to the ancient tribe in Italy called the Sabellians — thought to be experts in magic — or perhaps it is only a Latinization of his ordinary name, which might have been Zabel.(26)

Whatever the man's name, there are some definite details of his life and travels, even if these details are scanty. He was reputed to be an expert — if only semi-learned — in magic, astrology, necromancy and all the occult arts of his day. From about 1507 to 1513 he lived and taught on a freelance basis in Heidelberg where he came to be known as "the demigod of Heidelberg." In 1513 he was active in Erfurt— where he conjured images of Homeric myth while giving lectures to awestruck students. In the 1520s he lived in or near Wittenberg— the epicenter of Protestantism where Martin Luther had nailed his 95 theses to the church door in 1517. At least at the beginning of this time (in 1520) he appears to have been employed by the Roman Catholic bishop of Bamberg— which suggests all sorts of intrigues.

A document from the city of Ingolstadt dated 17 June, 1528 states that Faust was forcibly exiled from the city— but only after he had vowed not to take (magical) vengeance on the city leaders. It appears that Faust was often eventually ejected from cities where he made impact. He always lived in university towns and taught and influenced students there— but not as part of the official faculty. Magically the claimed to have restored the lost teachings of Plato and Aristotle and to be able to equal the miracles of Christ.(27) In 1534 there is evidence that Faust wrote a set of predictions for the German explorer Philipp von Hutten before a voyage to South America. Von Hutten wrote to his brother in 1540 to confirm the predictions.(28) During his career Faust is said to have openly declared that his knowledge and power were the result of a pact he had made with the Devil. Whenever he was exhorted to repent and return to the church he would reply that he preferred to remain loyal to the Devil because he "has fairly kept what he promised me and therefore I intend to keep fairly what I have promised and signed away to him."(29) Shortly before his death Faust returned to his native region in southwestern Germany and was found dead in the city of Staufen. His enemies assumed he had been taken to Hell— approximately 33 years after he first came on the scene as a disciple of he Devil in Heidelberg in 1507.

In the years immediately after Faust's death legends and tales about his life proliferated and grew in magnitude. Even in Faust's lifetime his exploits were being merged with those of legendary magicians. Within 25 to 30 years of his death a Latin manuscript concerning him was written by an anonymous student in Wittenberg. A German translation of this text was made sometime in the 1570s and the Latin original was eventually lost. The German edition of the first *Faustbuch* (Faust-Book) was published by Johann Spiess in 1587 at Frankfurt am Main. Its full title reveals much of its nature and purpose:

> History of Dr. Johann Faustus, the notorious magician and necromancer. How he sold himself to the Devil for an appointed time, what strange adventures he saw in that interval, himself inventing some and living through others, until he received at last his well-deserved requital.

The book was immensely popular. It went through several reprintings that year and the text was exported at once to England, as well as France (1598) and Holland (1592).(30) A new edition of a *Faust Book* appeared complied by Georg Rudolf Widmann in 1599 which contained more sensationalistic material and an even more moralistic tone. The main purposes of the early *Faust Books* appear to have been to make as much money as possible off of a lurid account of a wretched sinner and at the same time to preach with righteous indignation against the prideful excesses of the human spirit. This combination of puerile fascination and religious intolerance (mixed with a profit motive) is not foreign to our world today.

It has been noted that the books are of a strongly orthodox Lutheran bias with anti-Papal sentiments. In them the evil Dr. Faustus is sometimes contrasted with the good Dr. Luther.(31) Basically the early Faust Books were reflections of the ordinary — and still medieval — prejudices of the masses of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Faust legend as recounted in these books became the main source for later literary treatments. In the *Faust Book* the hero — or "villain" — is portrayed as a peasant's son who inherits a fortune. He goes to Wittenberg to study theology. He is talented, but displays unusual characteristics which make him suspect. After a while he abandons theology and takes up magic and medicine. In time he becomes a great physician knowing the secrets of herbology and drugs. (This no doubt is a reflection of the historical figure of Paracelsus.) But all this soon leads to his conjuration of demonic entities — and finally the signing of a pact with Mephistopheles. In this age when it was still thought that "seekers of knowledge outside the church were suspected of traffic with the minions of Hell"(32) it was widely believed that such a quest would be expressed through just such a pact with the Devil. This would be in the form of a legal contract in which the seeker promised his soul in return of sinful indulgence (or knowledge) for a specific period. In most Faust stories this was for 24 years.

After the pact is signed Faust is indulged in all kinds of things. He receives food, drink, clothing, money— as well as knowledge about Hell and the demons. He travels widely over all of Europe— and loves to go play practical jokes on the Pope in Rome and the sultan in Constantinople. Faust also visits Egypt and Asia— where he even sees the Garden of Eden. But Faust soon turns his attentions to love. He summons Helen of Troy— and spends years indulging in sexual excesses. In the end Faust is overcome with remorse and fear and at a "last supper" with his students he exhorts them to follow Christ. But on his last night Faust is indeed taken to Hell by a hoard of fiendish spirits.

In the first German *Faust Books* the chief sins of the magician are his "speculative" interests, that is, his attempts to discover ways to enjoy pleasures which medieval morality stigmatized as having their origins in the "seven deadly sins:" pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.(33)

As we know, the Faust material at once went over to England where it struck a responsive cord. The poet Christopher Marlow (1554-1593) began his drama *The Tragicall History: the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* as early as 1588, probably finished it around 1590— but it was not printed until 1604. Marlow was the first to write at all sympathetically about Faust and bring the ideas of the Renaissance to his subject. In *The Tragicall History* it is clear that Faustus sells his soul not only for pleasure but for knowledge and power. It is his will to become an earthly god through magic and to be able to direct worldly politics by influencing the Pope and Holy Roman Emperor. Despite whatever sympathies Marlow might have had with his subject, in the end Faustus is condemned as in all the *Faust Books*. The complete "Faustian" treatment of Faust remained for a more Faustian man to complete— J. W. von Goethe. We shall return to a transformed Faust in the next chapter.

The Faustian tradition is not limited to the historical personage of Faust or artistic fictionalizations of his adventures. There is also a tradition of practical magical manuals or *grimoires* ("grammars") which were reputed to be the very texts actually used by the magician to conjure spirits and demons. These are important because they show that the tradition was not merely literary but reflected an authentic school of magical operations. In German culture of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries the Faustians were not only exhorted by literature to follow in the footsteps of their exemplary model, but were provided with practical manuals purporting to tell them how to do just that.

There are a number of manuscripts referred to as Faustian grimoires— supposedly ones used or written by him. Most are in German, though some are in Latin. These were collected as early as 1846 in J. Scheible's series *Das Kloster*.(34) They bear titles such as *Doctor Faustens dreyfacher Hollenzwang* (Dr. Faust's Threefold Conjuration of Hell) or *D. I. Fausti Schwarzer Rabe* (D[r.] J[ohann] Faust's Black Raven). These works are part of the same general tradition that gave rise to the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* examples of which were also produced in Germany at about this time.

Almost all of these books appear to have been supplied with false dates and places of publication. The printed dates sometimes go back before Faust's time, while the places — including Rome and Vienna — betray an interest in making the magical practices contained in them particularly Roman Catholic.

The type of magical practices reflected in these books is fairly standard for medieval sorcery. The magician draws a circle around himself which is full of prayers, names of God or sacred symbols meant to protect him. Outside the circle there is a place — sometimes within a triangle — where the sign (sigill) of the spirit to be summoned is placed. Then, through prayers, conjurations and even threats, the magician calls up the angel or demon to his presence in the triangle outside the circle before him. Once there the magician deals with the entity, bargaining with it to try to obtain the particular gifts which correspond to that entity.

In essence this kind of magic, whether it deals with angels or demons, is a right-hand path practice insofar as it keeps the source of power and divinity (or diabolism) *outside* the self and the magician. In the final analysis it will not be the power or gifts bestowed upon the Faustian magician which will lead to his becoming a god-man, but the breadth and depth of *experience* provided by this magic. It is what the Faustian magician learns from his quest into the realms of the unknown beyond the limitations of time and space that is the secret of the *Black Raven.*

The legends and even the motivation for the publication of the grimoires, had a purely right-hand path bent. The creators and publishers of the material were trying to hold onto medieval thinking and philosophical morality for as long as possible and keep their societies in its thrall. One authority puts it well:

> Numerous are the legends built up around the personalities of men who defied the taboos of their times and sought to probe the unknown nature of man and the universe. Their strength lay in their "magic," their power over the "right" word; their weakness lay in their isolation, which invited distrust and condemnation.(35)

The western Middle Ages were singularly inhospitable to left-hand path philosophy because of the essentially anti-human bias of official church dogmas which tended to dominate the period. The Renaissance would partially, but only partially, compensate for the cultural losses incurred during the medieval epoch. It would not be until the 20th century that the spiritual baggage of the Middle Ages could be dispensed with completely. But even now the medieval period casts a shadow that can be seen in the shapes of modern-day witch-hunters to TV evangelists. Nothing that has made an impact on the course of human culture ever seems to disappear totally. Indeed the spirituality of the Middle Ages can be seen alive and well on American cable television on a regular basis.

Notes for Chapter 5

(1) Thomas S. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths* (Bloomington, IN: Inddiana University Press, 1984), pp. 143-162.

(2) MIrcea Eliade, *History of Religious Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicagor Press, 1982), vol. II, pp. 387-389.

(3) See Henry C. Lea, *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Macmillan, 1888).

(4) Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic Books, 1975)

(5) Cohn *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 1.

(6) Cohn *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 19.

(7) Eliade, *History*, vol. III, p. 184.

(8) Eliade, *History*, vol. III, p. 182.

(9) Concerning these and others Free Spirit works of literature, see Norman Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, 2nd ed.), p. 315 ff.

(10) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 172.

(11) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 172.

(12) On Joachim of Fiore see Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 99 ff. and Eliade, *History*, vol. III, pp. 108-112.

(13) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 108.

(14) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 154-155.

(15) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 150.

(16) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 183-185.

(17) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 175.

(18) Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 177-178.

(19) See Raymond B. Blakney, *Meister Eckhart: A New Translation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941) and more generally Eliade, *History*, vol. III, pp. 197-216.

(20) Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon, 1969), p. 25)

(21) H. Sprenger and J. Kramer (Institoris), *Malleus Malificarum* (London: Pushkin, 1928).

(22) Jeffery B. Russell, *History of Witchcraft*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 79.

(23) Russell, *History of Witchcraft*, p. 103.

(24) Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust*. trans. and introduced and edited by Charles Passage (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs and Merrill, 1965), p. xxii.

(25) Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, p. 111.

(26) R-M. S. Heffner, et al. eds. *Goethe's Faust* (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1954, p. 18.

(27) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 19.

(28) Passage, *Faust*, pp. xiv-xv.

(29) Passage, *Faust*, p. xiv.

(30) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 20.

(31) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 20.

(32) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 20.

(33) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 21.

(34) J. Scheible, *Das Kloster* (Stuttgart: [private], 1846), Fanst grimoires in vol II, pp. 807-930; vol V, pp. 1059-1195.

(35) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 19.

Chapter 6
Lucifer Unbound

The Modern Age and New Understandings
1433-1900

Presaging the birth of the historical Faust in northern Europe certain social circles in southern Europe — and especially in Italy — were undergoing radical transformations. The northern Italian cities of Florence, Milan, Genoa and Bologna became the cradles of the Modern Age in that period of cultural renewal we call the *Renaissance*.

Throughout the intellectually depressed period of the Middle Ages the spiritual treasures of the humanities — the writings of Plato, Aristotle and other pagan philosophers — had been grudgingly preserved in monasteries or had been cultivated in the intellectual haven provided by a more tolerant Islamic culture. In the west these treasures were not appreciated for the ideas they contained, but only for their utility in bolstering Christian dogmas or their usefulness as rhetorical textbooks for classical studies.

In the decades just before and just following the watershed year of 1500 the western world underwent a number of "revolutionary" changes. Throughout the 15th century northern Italian guilds and trade associations had — using newly refined financial institutions or banking — been able to build up powerful trading empires with connections to the eastern Mediterranean. There they did business in centers such as Tyre, which was at the end of trade routes reaching eastward to India and China. The wealth of this new class of mean and families — such as the Medicis, Borgias and Sforzas — allowed them to create a new culture separate from that dominated by the church or the old aristocracy. With this new power came new interests in pagan national traditions and pagan rational philosophy. The powerful families of the Florentine Renaissance became interested in "things that worked." It was this pragmatism that motivated much of their patronage of the arts and sciences.

It is ironic that the most lasting result of the Crusades — the church-inspired wars designed to "liberate" the sites in Jerusalem holy to Christians Land from the Muslims — was an opening of Christendom to the economic and cultural influences of Islam and other "eastern" civilizations. The "Holy Land" remained ultimately in Muslim hands.

Besides the crusades which sent tens of thousands of Christians (including children)(1) to their horrible and useless deaths the Church had committed a number of other acts which corroded its previously unquestioned position of spiritual authority— the Inquisition and widespread institutional corruption of the priesthood and sacraments of the church. These furthered widespread doubt about the veracity of church authority and dogmas. While on the topic of that, there came such world shattering discoveries as Columbus' discovery of a "New World" (unrecorded in the previously thought to be universal book of knowledge— the Bible) in 1492 or Copernicus' discovery that the sun, not the Earth, was the center of the planetary system, major cosmological underpinnings of the medieval world were turned upside down. The final blow to the Middle Ages came with the success of the Protestant Reformation (beginning 1517). For the first time since the beginning of the medieval period the absolute ideological authority of the Roman Catholic Church had been challenged effectively in the west. Within a generation all of northern Europe had broken with Rome.

The early Renaissance flourished in the protected, yet often volatile and fragile, havens for learning and the human spirit provided by the northern Italian families of patronage. It was a time of true rebirth. Some were so bold as to attempt the overt revival or renewal of the pagan Greco-Roman cult,(2) but the main purpose of most thinkers was to attempt a synthesis of sophisticated pagan philosophy with medieval Christian symbolism. The dominant philosophy emerging from the Florentine Renaissance was Neo-Platonism. In its Renaissance form this philosophy was to be a pagan system of thought gilded with Christian imagery for the sake of the consumption of the masses and of churchmen. It is perhaps shocking, yet manifestly true, that the greatest art treasure of the Vatican itself — the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel created by the "divine" Michelangelo — represent Neo-Platonic allegory using Biblical scenes.(3)

The greatest exponents of Neo-Platonism in the Italian Renaissance were Marcilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). What was most relevant to the further development of the left-hand path in Renaissance thought was the new found stature of the individual human being and of humanity in general.

Ficino wrote an essay called "Five Questions Concerning the Mind" (1495)(4) in which he makes it clear — in keeping with pagan philosophy — that the human mind or will is able, through rational means, to liberate and enlighten itself. So far, he is only in agreement with most other pagan systems east or west which do not posit the necessity of God's *grace* in this process. The aim of the mind could still be either belonging to the right-hand path (seeking ultimate union with the divine) or with the left-hand path (seeking permanence and divinity for itself).

Perhaps one of the most inspirational documents of the Renaissance relevant to the (re-)development of the left-hand path in the west is Pico della Mirandola's "Oration of the Dignity of Man." (1486).(5) In this "oration," which was to be the inaugural speech for a series of disputations concerning his 900 theses at the university in Florence, Pico discusses two major themes: the nature and dignity of humanity and the pursuit of the "unity of truth." In the latter he began syncretizing all philosophical and religious systems to find the unity holding them all together in truth. It is, however, the first theme that concerns us most.

The "Oration" contains a passage in which Pico has the Creator say to Man:

> The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with Thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed Thee, shalt ordain for Thyself the limits of Thy nature. ... Thou shalt have the power, out of Thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms which are divine.(6)

Pico holds that humanity finds itself in this world in an unfinished or *indeterminate* state of being. Humanity stands at the center of creation— it can evolve to the divine or devolve to the bestial. The soul of an individual is what is responsible for these transformations. It is precisely because of the "self-transforming nature" that mankind can be seen as noble. Man is the only creature not determined by *nature* but by *will* or consciousness, he *can* exist outside the hierarchy of nature and God in a separate order.

— "Old Nick" —

Another side of the Renaissance was shown by the first master of modern politics— Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). His most famous book, *The Prince* (written 1513) develops a political philosophy radically at odds with the Christian theory. Instead of deriving all power from God, Machiavelli sees that dealings with God must be based on pure faith, while political aims must be pursued in an atmosphere of pure reason— in order that the rational and *virtuous* ends of government may be achieved. The morality of the means used to realize these ends is measured purely in terms of their effectiveness. The

ends justify the means. As a ruler, Machiavelli concludes, it is better to be *feared* than to be *loved*— "since love depends on the subjects, but the prince has it in his own hands to create fear, the wise prince will rely on what is his own..."(7)

His cosmology, at least for political purposes, did not place God in a central position. He saw political affairs as largely the result of the interplay between *virtue* and *fortune* (or "fate").

The ideas and theories of Machiavelli had a profound effect on the advent of the modern world. His words have echoed throughout history since his death— as he dared to write what others only kept hidden in their hearts.

Machiavelli did not attack religion or Christianity directly, and always focused his attention on the practice of *virtue*, and "the Good," but because he largely *ignored* the importance of the Church and God in his political theory he was seen as a threat to the power of the religion. This which may have earned him his cognomen "Old Nick."

The Renaissance represents the infancy of the Modern Age which would eventually allow for the practice of more left-hand path philosophies. This Modern Age with — its increased interest in the stature and nobility of the individual human spirit along with reason, coupled with a new valorization of nature or physicality as the matrix of divinity rather than a barrier or hindrance to it all — led to later developments in the left-hand path.

— Lucifer and the Enlightenment —

In reality the Renaissance had been as much or more a revival of ancient things or a continuation of medieval ones than it was an innovation of new forms of thought. More radical solutions were sought by the liberated minds of the 17th and 18th centuries. Tradition of all sorts was suspect of gross error and *scientific* methods were pursued by which each individual could prove the nature of himself and the world (seen and unseen) around him. If Satan — the Adversary of God — is ever to be equated with the independent, incarnate, human mind in a rationally enlightened state of being, then it is in the Enlightenment that he finds his first home since the advent of Christianity in Europe.

The foundations of the Enlightenment rest with such thinkers as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in England and René Descartes (1596-1650) in France. In his major work *Novum Organum* (1620) Bacon championed a purely inductive method of reasoning which challenged all forms of received or "revealed" knowledge. All intellectual or spiritual authority was questioned more radically than ever before. Descartes, on the other hand, attempted to create a mathematical system of deductive reasoning. (His most famous formulation, *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), is in fact one of the keystones to any left-hand path philosophy. What can be known with the most certainty about reality is our existence as individual entities. This brings psychecentricism again to the forefront of western thought. Descartes himself realized the "diabolical" implications of his ideas on some level and tried for much of his life to reconcile his system with Christianity. But the genie was out of the bottle. By 1687 Isaac Newton (1642-1727) had published his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in which he presented a unified, rational, coherent theory of the mechanics of the universe as known in his time.

— To Rule in Hell —

The English poet John Milton (1608-1674) gave expression to some of the new religious attitudes and paradoxes in his epic work *Paradise Lost* (1667). Milton's protestant subjectivism allowed him to *feel* his way into the mythological figures in the Old Testament tale of the rebellion of Satan so deeply that when he gives voice to Satan and other demons of the pit— a heroic and highly sympathetic characters emerge. This is especially true in the first part of the poem.

In the Second Book of *Paradise Lost* Mammon speaks and puts words on the grievances of the minions of Hell:

Suppose he should relent
And publish Grace to all, on promise made
Of new Subjection; with what eyes could we
Stand in his presence humble, and receive
Strict Laws impos'd to celebrate his Throne
With warbl'd Hymns, and to his Godhead sing
Forc't Halleluiahs; while he Lordly sits
Our envied Sovran, and his Altar breathes
Ambrosial Odours and Ambrosial Flowers,
Our servile offerings. This must be our task
In Heav'n, this our delight; how wearisom
Eternity so spent in worship paid
To whom we hate. Let us not then persue
By force impossible, by leave obtained
Unacceptable, though in Heav'n our state
Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek
Our own good from our selves, and from our own
Live to our selves, though in this vast recess,
Free, and to none accountable, preferring
Hard liberty before the easy yoke
Of servile Pomp. (II: ll. 237-257)

Perhaps unconsciously Milton gave voice to the Romantic rebellion against conventional moral and religious authority in the generations to come.

In part perhaps because the Age of Reason was moving away from traditional images of God, there was also a move away from the images of the traditional Devil. Bolstered by the scientific theories of Newton, a new school of religious thought called Deism arose. Deists posit that a perfect and good God would only — and *could* only — create a perfect and good universe. From this it may be seen to follow that all apparent "evil" is actually misperceived good. This is the essence of the philosophy of Optimism championed by Gottfried W. Leibnitz (1646-1716) and the English poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) who wrote in his *Essay on Man*:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

However, there was also a more rebellious side to the Enlightenment, one that saw the political, religious and philosophical establishment — all predicated on the Christian concept of God — as an ideological foe. These, more than most, might tend to see the image of the old Christian Devil as a hero and role model. This rebellion of reason on earth was seen by some to be a reflection of the Rebellion in Heaven undertaken by Lucifer— who could now be restored as a figure bearing the light of reason and liberty. Some hundred years after the Enlightenment anarchists such as Mikail Bakunin will also see Lucifer in this same role. (See below.)

— The Hell-Fire Club —

One of the organizations of the past widely thought to be Satanic in nature was the so-called Hell Fire Club in England. This group was repeatedly written about in dozens of books about Satanism and black magic from its own time in the 1700s to many lurid

accounts written in this century. Eric Towers in his book *Dashwood* discusses and refutes most of these in some detail.(8) The Hell Fire Club was supposed to have wild orgies and Satanic Black Masses as a regular part of their activities. The true nature of the Club was much more complicated— and ultimately much more dangerous to the establishment than mere debauchery and mockery of Popery.

There were historically two separate and apparently unrelated groups to which the name "Hell Fire Club" was attached. Only the first of these, the one founded by Philip the Sixth Duke of Wharton in 1719, ever called itself by that name. The purpose of the Club was "to proclaim a profound contempt for established morality, thought and theology."(9) This Club met in the Greyhound tavern near St. James Square. They named the Devil himself as their president and three of the leading members went by the names "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."(10) This association attracted a great deal of attention to itself and was eventually banned and disbanded (in 1721) after much bad publicity. Philip went on to found the "Schemers"— a sort of society of rakes who occasionally got together for sexual escapades in the company of women who were customarily masked. This masking was ostensibly because the ladies were reputed to be of high stature in society.(11)

However, usually to the group founded by Sir Francis Dashwood (1708-1781) that the name Hell Fire Club (and most sensationalistic activities) have been ascribed. Dashwood founded two relevant societies: the Society of Dilettanti (in 1736) and the club that met near his estate of West Wycombe at Medmenham Abby after about 1751. The Dilettanti group was set up for the social gatherings of young Englishmen who had traveled to Italy. They would meet on the first Sunday of the month at the Bedford Head tavern in Covent Garden to dine and have learned and ribald discussions about their adventures in Italy. The actual name of the latter society is uncertain, but it seems to have been formed from Sir Francis' first name as a pun on the Popish order. The Friars of St. Francis or the Society of St. Francis are possible conjectures.(12) The "Friars" group is the one erroneously referred to as the "Hell Fire Club" in popular literature.

The good "Friars of St. Francis" were mostly well-to-do local friends of Sir Francis and not especially highly placed government officials; although Dashwood was a Member of Parliament, even becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1763, and remaining a government official until his death. He was a close acquaintance of Dr. Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania but their association appears to have been more of an official nature. There is no evidence for Franklin being one of the "Friars." Franklin did visit West Wycombe in 1773 and at one point Dashwood gave him a copy of a draft of a new version of the *Book of Common Prayer* Dashwood had written. In it Sir Francis had deleted all references to the Old Testament and made the whole more brief. He said of the Old Testament: "[It] is allowed to be an accurate and concise history and, as such, may and ought to be read at home... It is a Jewish book, very curious, perhaps more fit for perusal of the learned rather than suited to the capacitys [sic] of the general illiterate part of Mankind."(13)

Dashwood was certainly not a "Satanist." But what he was was perhaps more damaging to the cultural establishment than any occult antics would have made him. Like his acquaintance Ben Franklin, and like many of his Age of Reason contemporaries, Dashwood was outwardly orthodox but inwardly he was a Deist. This allowed for many divergent intellectual and spiritual views in Dashwood's life. His interest in Classical antiquity and spiritual values is reflected in his (what at first seems whimsical) construction of Temples to Apollo and Bacchus (Dionysius) on his West Wycombe estate. Dashwood had perceived the divergent tendencies of rationalism (Apollo), and of intuition and ecstasy (Dionysius) in Greek religion a full century before that other "Antichrist" Friedrich Nietzsche did so in his *Birth of Tragedy*.(14)

Another curiosity in the history of magic is reflected in the inscription Dashwood had placed over the entrance to the Abby: *Fay ce que voudras*, Do what you will. This was lifted directly from a reference to the "Abby of Thelema" in Rabelais' work *Gargantua and Panturel*.(15) This was, of course, again taken up by the English magician Aleister

Crowley. (See chapter 8.) The Abby at Medmenham, by the way, had been a genuine Cistercian establishment in the 13th century. The building ruins were in the Gothic style, which was further enhanced by Sir Francis who wished to have a "Gothick" — or northern — aesthetic to complement the classicism of the temples to Apollo and Bacchus.

Unfortunately Dashwood did not leave behind extensive writings detailing his philosophies— or if he did they were destroyed. But if he had it is certain that they would have been little serious discussion of Satanism in them.

The late 18th century was a time of violent and bloody revolution. In America the king of England, George III, who held himself to rule by Divine Right, by the Grace of God Almighty, was indicted by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia as a gross violator of Natural Law. On the principles of Reason and Natural Law the revolutionaries declare their enmity to the Divinely ordained tyrants of 18th century Absolutism. In the much extoled, yet now little read, "Declaration of Independence" Jefferson wrote:

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

George's defence would be that he, as king, was placed in his position by the Grace of God— and that to oppose the will of the king was tantamount to opposing that of God.

The revolutionary Republicans of America and France were seen by the authorities as agents of the Devil trying to "import" the otherworldly revolt in heaven to the political systems of the states of the world. In principle the establishment of the day was correct, and events of the 20th century have recorded at least a partial victory for this Temporal Revolt. Revolutionary Republicanism goes against every idea of medieval Christian political theory essentially based on the Pauline formula: "...there is no power but of God" (Romans 13:1) coupled with strictly authoritarian hierarchical theories of political organization inherited from Middle Eastern sources through Roman Imperialism. Republicanism, without abandoning the pagan ideals of an aristocracy of merit, attempts to pluralize the power centers of society. From the viewpoint of medieval Christian sentiment this would amount to a "Pandemonium."

Satan was little championed among the Republicans but the authority of the Church was widely and vigorously challenged in the name of Deism and Pietism. The point of view was usually taken that Jesus was a good and noble man and teacher of great moral values and truths who had been betrayed in death by unscrupulous followers. Thomas Jefferson went so far as to create the so-called "Jefferson Bible" which consisted of the words of Jesus extracted from the rest of the Biblical narrative, which he rejected.(16) The Old Testament was roundly rejected by Deists *in toto*. The great American patriot Thomas Paine wrote a scathing attack on the Bible is his controversial work *The Age of Reason*.(17) In this book Paine lampoons the whole Christian story of Satan. After first observing that the story of Satan's rebellion and exile from Heaven seems borrowed from pagan mythology, Paine makes the following analysis:

> The Christian Mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again to bring on the sequel of the fable. He is then introduced into the Garden of Eden, in the shape of a snake or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is no way surprised to hear a snake talk; and the issue of this *tete-a-tete* is that he persuades her to eat an apple, and that eating of that apple damns all of mankind.

> After giving Satan this triumph over the whole creation, one would have supposed that the Church Mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back again to the pit; or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain), or have him put *under* a mountain, as the former mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women and doing more mischief. But instead of this they leave him at large, without even obliging him to give his parole— the secret of which is, that they could not do without him; and after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipation, nine-tenths of the world beside, and Mahomet [Muhammed] into the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian Mythology.(18)

The even more radical French revolutionists were not satisfied with the rationalistic Deism of the Anglo-Americans. Many among them wanted the official demise of the Church and its replacement with a neo-pagan religion or pure Reason. More and more, the image of Lucifer and the idea of Reason will become associated as the conflict between "faith" and "reason" becomes ever sharper in the Modern Age.

In the "mainstream" of divergent 18th century thought — whether Neo-Classicist or Romantic — the invocation of a new sacred formula "Nature" usually called to mind an orderly, benevolent (or at least neutral), even "rational," system. Whether it was the Natural Law of the Neo-Classicist or the "back to nature" sentiment of the Romantics, Nature was the New God(-dess) defining the best aspirations of an enlightened mankind.

The Divine Marquis

At least one man stood against this all-pervasive sentiment: Dontien Alphouse François Marquis de Sade (1740-1814). Although for reasons that will soon become apparent, the "Divine Marquis"(19) was not what we might call a true Satanist, he has been widely thought to have been a paragon of evil and called "Satan's Saint."(This is the title of novel based on de Sade by Guy Endor.) But was his philosophy, which remained immature, one on the roots of the modern left-hand path?

Philosophically the Marquis de Sade was a radical materialist. In this idea he was following his countryman Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709-1752). La Mettrie held that the soul — or any other previously thought to be "spiritual" part of man — was in fact entirely physical or chemical in its nature. In this idea he was, of course, following the philosophy of the ancient Epicureans. He acknowledged this philosophical debt in his book *The System of Epicurus*. These ideas were so radical for his time that he was exiled from France and his books burned. One of his most important books was *Man a Machine*. La Mettrie eventually found his way to the court of the Prussian king Frederick the Great, who became his patron. Among La Mettrie's ideas which were to influence de Sade profoundly were that the imagination — the image-forming ability — is the chief function of the soul and that there is a close correspondence between a person's appearance and his or her character.(20) These ideas also appear to have influenced Anton LaVey.

The works of the Marquis de Sade hare hardly sexual or "pornographic" documents as is widely thought by those who have never read them. They are truly works of philosophy or "anti-theology." Every page de Sade writes reeks of his deep rage in the face of the Roman Catholic God of 18th century France. This rage stems from the same idealism which moved Deists. All theological evidence of God, be it from the Bible of pious churchmen, objectively pointed to a cruel and despotic God whose agents hypocritically claimed ommibenevolence for him. The God of the Bible and Church is manifestly wicked and villainous. But in this Age of Reason, this conclusion did not necessarily lead to the idea that the enemy of God, Satan, must be a hero. The whole Judeo-Christian tradition tended to be rejected as superstitious nonsense.

On occasion the Devil is spoken well of in de Sade's works. One passage of *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) sums up de Sade's attitude toward God and the Devil and is spoken by the character Dolmance:

> Had man been formed wholly good, man should never have been able to do evil, and only then would the work be worthy of god. To allow man to choose was to tempt him; and God's infinite powers very well advised him what would be the result. Immediately the being was created, it was hence to pleasure that God doomed the creature he had himself formed. A horrible God, this God of yours a monster! Is there a criminal more worthy of our hatred and or implacable vengeance then here!...
>
> More powerful than this villainous God, a being still in possession of his power, forever able to brave his author, the *Devil* by his seductions incessantly succeeds in leading astray the flock that the Eternal reserved unto himself. Nothing can vanquish the hold this demon's energy has upon us.(21)

At first de Sade sees Nature as a neutral force— the true creatrix of the world. She is the actual *first cause*, not "God." But de Sade soon discovers what he determines the actual meaning of Nature is for Man: corruption and destruction. This is made explicit in a passage in *Juliette* (1794) which could be taken as de Sade's manifesto on Nature. With fitting irony he places the words in the mouth of the Bishop of Rome.(22)

The Pope says:

> No earthly creature is expressly formed by Nature ... all are the result of her laws ... very different creatures probably inhabit other globes... But these creatures are neither good nor beautiful, precious nor created ... they are the result of Nature's unthinking operations.
>
> Once cast man has nothing further to do with Nature; once nature has cast him, her control over man ends; he is under the control of his own laws that are inherent in him... [T]hese laws are those of his personal self-preservation, of his multiplication ... laws which are ... vital to him but in no way necessary to Nature, for he is no longer of Nature, no longer in her grip, he is separate from her. If man destroys himself, he does wrong— in his own eyes. But that is not the view Nature takes of the thing. As she sees it, if he multiplies he does wrong for he usurps from Nature the honor of a new phenomenon... [O]r multiplication ... is therefore decidedly detrimental to the phenomena whereof Nature is capable.
>
> Thus those that we regard as virtues become crimes from her point of view... The most wicked individual on earth, the most abominable, the most ferocious, the most barbarous, and the most indefatigable murderer is therefore but the spokesman of her desires, the vehicle of her will, and the surest agent of her caprices.

De Sade sees Nature as a mechanical creatrix possessing only the will to propagate herself. But she is limited by her own laws so that this can not occur as long as the creatures already formed continue to live and multiply. Therefore she can not propagate herself anew until the present creatures have been eliminated. When a human therefore undertakes to destroy life, to degrade and defile it, he or she is doing Nature's will.

Humanity is now separated from Nature's will and control, but when humans act in accordance with the hidden "will" of Nature, they are rewarded with pleasure *and* success. When they act contrary to the will of Nature, they are visited with pain and failure.

The human faculty of imagination is the key to de Sade's psychology. "Imagination is pleasure's spur ... directs everything, is the motive for everything; is it not thence that our pleasure comes?"(23) In de Sade's grand scheme, of course, it is the imagination which spurs man to act in accordance with the destructive desires of Nature. However, even if one rejects de Sade's cosmology, his psychology remains of interest. It is here that his ideas conceming the erotic enter his philosophy most directly. Ultimately, de Sade holds that the pursuit of pleasure is the object of human life, and that physical satisfaction is more noble than the merely mental. Happiness depends on the greatest possible extension of pleasure. This is done by enlarging the scope of one's tastes and fantasies. It is only through willful imagination that the possibilities for pleasure are extended. Social or *religious* conditioning prevents this in most cases. Finally, happiness is not so much found in the enjoyment of pleasure as in the desire itself and in the destruction of obstacles in the way of its accomplishment.

De Sade posited that there were essentially three kinds of people erotically speaking: 1) those of weak or repressed imagination, courage and desires— and who live without remarkable incident; 2) "natural perverts" — who act out of obsession which is usually congenital in origin, and 3) libertines— who consciously develop their fantasies and who set about to realize them. It is this third category, the libertines, which de Sade saw as the apex of humanity. Libertines, through active use of the imagination, transform themselves through acts of will — in accordance with Nature. For de Sade the greatest pleasures were to be found in overcoming things which may have at one time inspired fear or disgust.(24)

Whether in the sexual or more abstract philosophical sphere, the truest definition of Sadism — or perhaps we should use the term Sadeanism to distinguish it from the pathological terminology of current psychiatry — is: "The pleasure felt from the observed modifications on the external world produced by the will of the observer."(25) That this definition could serve equally well when describing the pleasure artists feel when working in their media should not be overlooked.

The importance of the "Divine Marquis" to the modern left-hand path lies not so much in the most essential aspects of his philosophy as in its reception— especially its erotic component — by Anton LaVey in the 20th century. De Sade's philosophy is to a great extent underdeveloped. His philosophical writing career only lasted some 15 years; years spent in prisons and asylums hardly conducive to the development of a reflective system. There seems to be an inherent internal antagonism between de Sade's professed radical materialism and the assigned role of the *will* and *imagination* in the process of transforming human beings into his idealized libertines. While de Sade rightly rejected as pure expedient illusion the whole notion of the God of the Church, he also saw a dark side to the face of Nature so extoled by Neo-Classicists and Romantics alike. For him there was a demonic side to nature which he only reluctantly and sparingly would ever identify with the Devil. He was right not to do so. For that *thing* which he glimpsed seems closely akin to the substance of Yahweh Elohim— the dark Demiurge of the Gnostics and "Sadistic" creator of the material universe.

Enlightenment thought rejected both the traditional God of the Church and the Devil in favor of Nature and a perfect creator God— perfect in his Reason. These ideas are further refined in the Neo-Classical period which will again be more hospitable to images from the past— at least as literary motifs.

The Dawn of the Faustian Age

Although the Middle Ages had ended in a historical sense during the 1500s, elements inherent in medieval culture, such as political Absolutism, continued to be a part of the established cultures until the early 19th century. The legacy of the Middle Ages still continues to haunt us on the brink of the 21st century, but it is in the theme of Faust, inherited from medieval literature of the propagandistic intolerance, that we can see the cultural transformation from those times into a kind of universal "Faustian Age." Whether the pact our culture signed will have its desired effects waits to be determined.

Whenever I have the opportunity to teach *Faust* in a literature or humanities course, I like to point out a certain attitudinal fact to the students. First, I tell them of the origins of the Faustian literature. How it had been written to warn would-be dabblers in the "Black Arts" away from seeking three things forbidden by orthodox cultural authority in the Middle Ages: knowledge, power and pleasure. But, I ask of my bright cheeked students, are these not the three culturally legitimate reasons you are sitting in this class today? Perhaps for the idealistic reason of gaining *knowledge*, perhaps for the pragmatic reason of potential career advantages a degree will bring (*power*), or perhaps for the pure *fun* of learning— none of which would have been found short of sinful to the medieval mind-set. We live, for better or worse, in a Faustian, some might go so far as to say a "Satanic," Age. By this I do not wish to imply that the times are in any intrinsic way *evil*. They are, however, times of transformation and change.

— Goethe and Faust —

The greatest single poetic monument describing the spiritual position of humanity in the Modern Age is *Faust: Eine Tragödie* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). Goethe was himself the paragon of the "Faustian Man" as he defined — or re-defined — it in his work. It could have been no less, because the poetic drama of *Faust* was actually a kind of "spiritual autobiography" of the poet himself. The work appeared in two parts. Part I was published in 1808 and part II, only finished just before his death, was published in 1832. But the poet actually began to work with the Faust material as early as 1770-1775. In his old age Goethe said that he worked on *Faust* "without plan and without a break."

On one level Goethe follows much of the outline of the traditional Faust literature. But his work is on the surface more fragmentary, yet possessed of an inner level of the same coherence and archetypal unity as the author's own soul.

Goethe was no mere poet. He was a philosopher and a talented scientist as well as a professional statesman. He may have been one of the last truly "Renaissance Men." Beginning around 1768 he studied alchemical and magical texts intensively. But his spirituality was to remain always a highly individualistic one. A family friend, Susanna von Klettenberg, introduced the young Goethe to pietism and spiritism. Ultimately Goethe's philosophy and spirituality was a unique synthesis of the ideas of his time coupled with his own inner vision. Throughout his life Goethe built an enormous reputation for himself through his writings. By the time of his death he had reached the level of a living culture hero of international stature.

Goethe's *Faust* begins with a "Prolog in Heaven" in which the Lord wagers with Mephistopheles that he can not tempt Faust — the representative of all Mankind — to ruination. This exchange is, of course, based on the beginning of the biblical book of Job. Meanwhile, Faust is a highly dissatisfied man. He has attained all the knowledge available in the world— yet he thirsts for more. So he turns from scientific pursuits to *magic*. With the aid of magical grimoires he first conjures the Earth-Spirit and then attempts to conjure the Devil. At first he is apparently unsuccessful, and therefore concludes to end his life. However, just as he is about to drink poison he is startled to new life by the tolling of church bells on Easter morning. This demonstration of the depth of his commitment — to both life and death — coupled with the magical formulas is successful in bringing the Demon to him— at first in the form of a stray black poodle who follows him home.

Faust forms a pact with Mephisto unique in the Faustian literature. Because Faust believes himself incapable of satisfaction — and does not desire it — he concludes a pact:

> Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
> "Verweile doch, du bist so schön!"
> dann magst du mich in Fesseln schalgen
> dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn.

(If I ever say to any moment: / "Remain— you are so beautiful!" / then you may put me in fetters / then I will gladly go to my death.)

This pact is unlike others in the Faustian literature in that it is not based on a time limit. Each party to the pact believes this to be to his own advantage: Mephisto believes he can "satisfy" Faust quickly— so he will not have to wait years to obtain his soul, while Faust believes that nothing can satisfy him— and so he will have the Devil's services forever.

After this Faust and Mephisto set out on many adventures. In Part I they will explore the mysteries of the microcosm— in Part II those of the macrocosm. These include the seduction and eventual moral and physical destruction of an innocent milkmaid named Margaret or "Gretchen." (The name Margaret means "pearl" in Greek, and Goethe's own first love was named Gretchen.) Part I ends with Margaret about to be executed for the murder of her illegitimate child by Faust.

Part II is so fantastic in its scope that it has only rarely been staged. Central to this half of the tragedy is Faust's conjuration of, and union with, Helen of Troy— the eternal ideal of feminine beauty. In the end— after many years of Mephisto's attempts to satisfy Faust's hunger for power and knowledge— that moment does come when Faust says of it— *Verweile doch, du bist so schön*! This occurs while he is involved with claiming land from the sea in Holland— in imitation of God's separation of the earth from the waters. In the end the Heavenly Host and the Infernal Legions fight over Faust's soul. A member of the Heavenly Host, "a Penitent, once named Gretchen," intercedes on behalf of Faust's soul and saves it from damnation. The final lines of the poem (ll. 12104-12111) sung by the "Mystical Choir" read:

> Alles Vergängliche
> Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
> Das Unzugängliche,
> Hier wird's Ereignis;
> Das Unbeschreibliche
> Hier ist's getan;
> Das ewig Weibliche
> Zieht uns hinan.

(Everything that is transitory / is only an image; / the inaccessible here becomes actual [there]; / the indescribable [there] / is enacted here; / the Eternal-Feminine / draws us onward.)

Faust, an almost fluid document produced continuously throughout the poet's life, is the most vivid representation of Goethe's philosophy. To be sure he made this philosophy more explicit elsewhere in more prosaic forms. The key-word to Goethe's philosophy is said to be *Werden* (Becoming) or *Wandelung* (Transformation).(26) True to the *Zeitgeist* of the Age of Reason Goethe saw "Nature" as an all-encompassing matrix of reality. For him Nature was "a reality of matter and mind, a synthesis of substance and energy, in which the *geprägte Form* [characteristic form] of any existing being was the necessary result of its intrinsic purpose."(27) So for Goethe *Life* — or existence — was a synthesis of substance and energy "held together by an unbroken nexus of continuous change ('*Werden*')."(28) His primary interest was the discovery of hidden archetypes or first forms; secondary to this, but linked to it, was the observation of isolated "forms" in Nature. Man's ability to discern the archetypes is dependent upon the intellectual or spiritual development (*Bildung*) of the individual. In this view Man can not become a fully objective observer of a continuously dynamic process of which he himself is a part.(29) This is essentially the *modern* synthesis of the ancient dichotomy of *psyche* and *physis*. It is clear that Goethe and his contemporaries struggled with some of the same questions Plato had over two millennia earlier. For Goethe the Form is revealed by its particulars, each contributing to understanding the Form.

There are, of course, many different kinds of interpretations of Goethe's *Faust*. The most convincing and eternally valid and useful, however, is one that sees the *whole* as the story of the transformations of the soul of Modern Man— it is after all the spiritual and poetic story of one exemplary model of one such man, Goethe himself. Such an interpretation would see each of the major "characters" as archetypes within a single evolving soul. Faust, Mephisto, Gretchen and Helen are all internal to the soul. The drama is the story of the complex interactions of these archetypes within the soul through time.

The figure of Faust represents the self or I-consciousness which is the complex psychological essence of Modern Man. Faust says of himself:

> Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust,
> die eine will sich von der anderen trennen:
> die eine hält in derber Liebeslust
> sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
> die andere hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
> zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.
>
> (ll. 1112-1117)

(Two souls dwell, alas, in my breast, / one desires to separate itself from the other: / the one clings to the world with clutching organs / in a dogged lust of love / the other lifts itself forcibly from the gloom / toward the fields of sublime ancestors.)

This is indicative of the dichotomy of the strivings of modern man— one toward material life and accomplishment and one toward intellectual advancement. This echoes the dual nature of the "sin" of mankind reflected in Judaic lore— one fleshly one intellectual. Also, it foreshadows the two schools of the postmodern left-hand path.

Faust is a *positive* figure. He is a "yea-sayer" to life and all things in it. Yet there is — as there *must* be — a void, an unrealized *negative* space in the soul, a shadow or darkness, into which the soul may grow and evolve. This is the function of Mephisto. The demon is the contrary, the adversary, to whatever is posited— the antithesis to Faust's thesis. The drama unfolds in the ongoing dynamic (*werdende*) synthesis of the two. Mephistopheles says of himself:

> [Ich bin] ein Teil von jener Kraft
> die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.
>
> (l. 1336)

and

> Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!
>
> (l. 1338)

([I am] a portion of that power / that always wants evil, and always effects the good. I am the spirit, which always negates.)

The negation, or counterforce, of Mephisto is necessary to the dynamic process of becoming. From within Faust is driven by a mysterious force — manifesting itself in his sense of dissatisfaction — and is drawn onward by an equally mysterious force dwelling outside his normal field of consciousness— "the Eternal-Feminine."

This Eternal-Feminine is embodied in the figures of Margaret (Gretchen) in Part I (the microcosm) and of Helen of Troy in Part II (the macrocosm). These are the two aspects of the mysterious archetype that is the object of the seeker's eternal longing. Gretchen is the earthly reflection of the ideal Helen. But through suffering Gretchen too is lifted into the realm of the archetypal— and becomes the agent of Faust's salvation. The left-hand path connotations of this philosophy should be obvious from the discussion of the role of the feminine in the left-hand path systems of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Faust is the modem exemplary model of spiritual heroism— complex and doomed to freedom and to the quest for knowledge and power. Although some aspects of Goethe's *Faust* seem to be "Christian" in nature, neither the religion of Goethe nor the character he created out of himself could be called "orthodox." When Gretchen poses her famous "Gretchen Question"— *wie hast du's mit der Religion*? (what's your position on religion?), Faust answers in part:

> Schau' ich nicht Aug' in Auge dir,
> Und drängt nicht alles
> nach Haupt und Herzen dir,
> Und webt in ewigem Geheimnis
> Unsichtbar sichtbar neben dir?
> Erfüll davon dein Herz, so gross es ist,
> Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist,
> Nenn' es denn, wie du willst,
> Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!
> Ich habe keinen Namen
> Dafür! Gefühl ist alles;
> Name ist Schall und Rauch,
> Umnebelnd Himmelsglut.

(Does my eye not gaze into your eye, / and doesn't everything / press itself into your head and heart / and weave in eternal mystery / the invisible made visible beside you? Fill your heart with it, as great as it is / and when you are completely happy in that feeling, / call it what you will, / call it happiness! heart! love! God! / I have no name / for it! Feeling is everything; / A name is sound and smoke, / obscuring the glow of heaven.

To this Gretchen rightly replies: "*...du hast kein Christentum*" ("...you have no Christianity"). In this, of course, she is right in so far as *orthodoxy* is concerned. Faust, and Goethe, have developed their own religion— a modern synthesis of all that has gone before them.

In many ways with the modern Faust we return to the ideal man of pagan antiquity. If, with the Socratic philosophies, we say that everything in the world has its special function, and to fulfill that function is the *Good* of that thing, then Faust as the steadfast *seeker of knowledge and power* may be seen as the exemplary model of human *Good* — not "evil" — since mankind's apparent *unique* function is to gain increasing consciousness and organize increasing potencies. As long as Faust is *true to his quest* he does Good— and it is this innate truth that "saves" him in the end. He is saved by the eternal object of his own subjective questing the mysterious Eternal-Feminine.

To some extent Goethe revolutionizes the left-hand path in the west. But was he himself a lord of the left-hand path? The answer, given our criteria, must be a reluctant no. On one side the overriding implications of his great work, *Faust*, would seem to indicate a left-hand path orientation. However, his unequivocal philosophical position on the role of man in nature and his decidedly ambiguous stance *vis-a-vis* the imagery of culturally traditional "evil," show him to be a manifestation of one of the "doubting angels" who took neither side in the battle between Lucifer and the Trinity.(30)

— The Classical Devil —

Although Goethe may be considered a proto-Romantic by cultural historians, he considered himself a Classicist, seems to sum up his general assessment.

Classicism was the final flowering of the ideologies spawned in the Enlightenment— or so-called Age of Reason. In cultural history it may be said to be characteristic of the time period from about 1700 to 1800. With Classicism, philosophy and aesthetics began to return to the established *forms* of Greco-Roman ideals— but this was synthesized with the

Enlightenment concept of questioning and/or rejecting all forms of received knowledge. The paradox here is obvious. The thoroughly *modern* split between the signifier and the signified, or between the symbol and the symbolized, was complete. Things could be regarded in a much more detached, "scientific" way.

In many respects Goethe fashioned the character of his Mephistopheles after the spirit of the Age of Reason— inspired perhaps in part by the character and temperament of the French philosopher Voltaire— rational, aloof, ironical.

Because at the time of the Enlightenment and Classicism popular and political culture were still thoroughly dominated by the spirit of Absolutism there was some room in rational circles for revalorizing the "spirit of contradiction" (the Devil) as the spirit of rationality. From our virtually postmodern perspective today it is clear that here we have the beginnings of the split between the image or "sign" of the Devil and that which he had signified in the pre-modern (medieval) world, i.e. "evil." From this time on through the remainder of the Modern Age serious attempts to deal with the Devil will come more and more from the artistic rather than theological world.

In reality the true Devil, the exemplary model of magician ou the left-hand path, is fully liberated again from the theological dungeon of medievalism with the advent of Classicism. The gate was opened during the Renaissance, and his chains were broken by the Enlightenment, but only with Classicism does he begin to walk the earth freely again. The true essence of this Devil is, of course, the principle of isolate intelligence made aware of this material embodiment. The Classical Devil is the human spirit exercising its freedom and ratiouality, its fleshly existence and sense of beauty, its objectivity and sense of humor against the grain of cultural and political Absolutism which continued to wrap itself in the armor of divinely righteous justification.

The sense of humor displayed by the Classical and Enlightenment Devil is a powerful aspect. It at once tells us that the dungeon of medievalism had not dampened Old Nick's wit, and that he remained clever enough to use his most devastating of weapons. It also points to a certain disidentification between the image of the Devil and the world he begins to find so ironically humorous.

From the point of view of the left-hand path today it is important to note that during this dawn of the Modern Age the eternal values or principles which characterize the left-hand path in any age or in any culture were in reality only liberated (and then only partially) to be able to effect some of the work they had done in previous ages of western culture.

— Satan in the 19th Century — The Devil and the Romantics

In most things the Romantics sought for the same ends and goals or held many of the same ideals as the Classicists. But they went about it all in a precisely contrary fashion. The Romantics reacted to the perceived sterility and rigidity of Classicism and wanted to infuse human life with more emotion and vitalism. The essential hallmark of Romantic thought is an inwardness (G. *Innerlichkeit*) or subjectivity. This is in contrast to the objectivistic trait of Classicism. The Romantics would extol feeling over thought. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the French father of Romanticism, said in his *Confessions*: "I felt before I thought."(31) Where the Classical aesthetic had praised the simple, clear, exact and complete, the Romantic aesthetic acclaimed the complex, obscure, approximate and fragmentary.

In many ways Romanticism represents the final vital synthesis of western culture. Although æsthetically and emotionally it extols the virtues of a return to bygone nights, to "medievalism," to the inner world of dreams (and nightmares)— the scientific methodology and Classical modes of intellectual analysis are not rejected totally. But instead of the physical universe being the favored object of inquiry, as with the Classicists, now the history of human culture in all its aspects, life and the mysteries of the mind and soul retake center stage.

The Classicist had celebrated the bright and clear virtues of southern European culture — that of ancient Hellas and Rome — the Romantic would celebrate the dark and misty inner landscapes of the North— both ancient and medieval. "Romanticism" is in fact such a product of the Northern mind that it has been revalued as "Germanticism" on occasion. Perhaps a better term would be "Gothicism" which the Romantics *themselves* favored at the time. With the inward turning of Romanticism came nationalism as that subjectivity was expressed throughout the organic collective of individual *nations*. But on the level of the individual person this inward turn was often manifested as an interest in the "demonic."

For our subject the greatest effect of the Enlightenment, of "modernism," had been the permanent separation of the *idea* of evil from the *image* of the Devil. Once this modernist separation was complete, the image of the Devil, or Satan, was liberated to undergo revalorization in the hands of essentially Romantic artists and thinkers— who in many instances proved to be powerful magicians on the stage of the history of ideas.

The Romantic revalorization of Satan, or the Devil, was primarily the work of the English Romantic poets William Blake (1757-1827), George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). Every Romantic seems to have had a slightly different feeling about the mythopoetic place of Satan, or Lucifer, in the scheme of things.(32) But there are some important themes that hold most of them together as well.

To begin with, "God" and "Satan," or other medieval theological terms, had become essentially literary symbols for the modernist Romantics. This is not to say they were not real. At first this may seem to trivialize the entities referred to by the terms— this especially would seem so to medievalistic apologists such as J. B. Russell. In fact, Satan is not "trivialized" by the poets— the symbol is revaluated and redeemed by making it again relevant to human experience. They recognize that the essence of the meaning of human existence is to be found not in a system of supposedly supernatural laws presided over by institutionalized authority but rather in the experience of the individual heart and soul. Because the medieval mind holds mankind to be in a sense "trivial," all things which symbolize and embody mankind and its faculties are also so valued.

The Romantics see the Devil as a complex being or symbol. He is neither all-evil, or all-good. He is a mixture of complex and ambiguous characteristics— as is the human soul of which he is perhaps a projection. Mythically the Judeo-Christian figure of Satan was combined with the Hellenic figure of Prometheus. This combination is an natural, as Prometheus is in many ways the prototype of the Christian Devil. (See chapter 3.)

None of the Romantics could as yet call themselves "Satanists," though they were often called this by an outraged middle class populace. Essentially based on Milton's portrayal of him in *Paradise Lost*, Romantics did make him a heroic figure worthy of human emulation. They admired Satan for his act of rebellion against legalistic and organized authority (= God) and for his sublime existence, majesty and stubborn courage against all odds. They could empathize with Old Nick.

Romantics are, however, obsessed with the concept of love. Although they could see Prometheus as a lover of mankind they still preferred to use the symbol of Jesus as the paragon of love in their mythopoetic systems. This is not, however, the Jesus of historical Christian tradition but one they claimed as the *true* Jesus. They may or may not have a basis in the evidence, as we saw in chapter 4.

While the northern Romantics were engaged in creating new syntheses and in some cases harkening back to pre-medieval mythology to explore the demonic, the French tended to delve into more traditional diabolical imagery and feelings. Early French literary Romanticism — founded by François-René Chateaubriand (1768-1848) — was highly sympathetic to the spirit of the Middle Ages, and against revolutionary thought. (It was quite the opposite in the north.) Most French Romantics remained firmly in the grip of Catholic mythology, medieval aesthetics and anti-revolutionary sentiments. Demonic imagery was principally used for its ironic impact or horrific effect. Victor Hugo (1802-1885) eventually developed a pro-revolutionary, anti-medieval position within French

Romanticism. His ideas are imaginatively explored in his historical novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831)— better known perhaps under the popular title "*Hunchback of Notre-Dame*." The Devil becomes a symbol for rebellion as well as alienation or separation from God— God being seen Platonically as the Good, or Being. Thus God of the traditional churches is rejected and replaced by the idea of infinite love. Satan is seen as an exemplary model of the human condition— mixed with good and evil.

The Romantic with the fondest emotions for the Devil seems to have been William Blake. In his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) Blake depicted Satan as a symbol of vital creativity who struggles to be free of a coercively passive God.(33) Blake — who said of Milton that he was of the "Devil's party without knowing it" because he wrote of freedom when he wrote of the Devil and of limitations when he wrote of God — took Miltonian subjectivism one step further. Blake invented his own religion and his own mythology— and presaged schools of thought in the 20th century. In Milton and Blake we see the roots of the 20th century movement called "The Process, Church of the Final Judgement." (See Volume II.)

In the midst of all this Romanticism one of the major roots of the coming occult revival was being laid by Alphonse Louis Constant (1810-1875) who wrote seriously about the idea of true Satanism. Constant is better known under his pseudonym Eliphas Levi. He tended to portray the Devil in a positive light— when Levi supported revolutionary change (mainly in the 1840s) Satan was the rebel, but later when Levi came to advocate the establishment of law and order Satan was portrayed as the model ruler. In any event Levi's positive valuation of an occult Satan must be viewed as the forerunner to current philosophical left-hand path thought in the west.

In France the dark side of the Romantic movement developed into a variety of sometimes bizarre pseudo-catholic sects on the one side, and the artistic-literary traditions of Symbolism and Decadence on the other.

The father of the French Symbolist movement was the Romantic poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Baudelaire, himself, drew on the early American tradition of darkness found in Hawthorne, Poe and Charles Brocken Brown. His words were themselves a gateway to darkness for such diverse figures as Kurt Seligmann, Clark Ashton Smith and Diamanda Galas. Although he wrote such poems as "Litanies to Satan" in his *Flowers of Evil* collection (1857), Baudelaire could in no meaningful way be described as a Satanist. The poet was one of those unfortunate souls who believed in the traditional ideas of God and sin— and who was unable to prevent himself from committing sin.

Among the Decadents, Isidore Ducasse (1846-1870), who used the literary pseudonym Lautreamont, is perhaps most interesting from the Satanic viewpoint. His *Les chants de Maldoror* (1868) is a neo-Sadean celebration of cruelty. Both Baudelaire and Lautreamont were moved by a deep sense of outrage against hypocrisy both within themselves and in the world around them. This opposition to hypocrisy and courage to face even the darkest aspects of the human soul make the Decadents interesting from a left-hand path perspective. Lautreamont is interesting in his connection of alienage with evil, foreshadowing such modern writers as H. P. Lovecraft or Don Webb. However, their essentially aesthetic or artistic context make them difficult to study from a philosophical viewpoint.

James Webb puts the Symbolist/Decadent movement in the arts into an occult context when he writes:

> [Symbolists] set out ... with assumptions which were anti-rationalist and anti-materialist, to produce anti-naturalist art. Because this approach was based on a total rejection of the world it may be legitimate to call it "spiritual." Whether it led to "Satanism," or the cult of the Beautiful, the face this reaction presented to the public was uniformly rebellious.(34)

Whereas the aesthetics present us with obscure ideas beautifully wrought, the pseudo-Satanic sect leaders demonstrate their doctrines quite clearly— or at least as clearly as they are able. Of these sects there were essentially two types, one which clung to medieval metaphysics and cousidered itself generally Christian and the other more in line with the Decadence of the literati.

In August of 1839 Eugene Vintras, a manager of a cardboard-box factory in Tilly-sur-Seule in Normandy, France, had a vision of the Arch-Angel Michael, later the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph appeared to him. From these experiences he founded his own sect, the "Work of Mercy" (*Oeuvre de la Misericorde*). This sect was soon linked with the political interests of the "Royalist Party" which wanted to restore a king to France— a shady operation spearheaded by one Ferdinand Geoffroi, an acquaintance of Vintras in Tilly. The sect grew rapidly, but ran afoul of establishment government officials and the highest levels of the Catholic church— despite the fact that it was supported by some local priests. The sect was declared heretical by the Pope in 1848— which only spurred its development. Vintras now became the Pope of his own movement with his own priests. Women were also admitted to the priesthood. The sect spread to England, Italy and Spain.(35)

The visions of Vintras have been compared to those of William Blake or Emmanuel Swedenborg(36) in that they involve the perception of the dichotomy between extremes of Heaven and Hell. But the rather unsophisticated Vintras could conceive of this only in terms of what he had absorbed from Catholicism. So he cannot see the necessity of reconciling the two extremes— instead he sets out to destroy what he identifies as the "church of Satan." There is every reason to believe that by this Vintras meant the official orthodox Roman Catholic Church.

At the same time, it is curious to note Pope Pius IX issued the *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864 in a theological attempt to cast all efforts toward radical social or cultural change in the mold of a Satanic force in the world. Freemasonry was especially targeted, but so too were other occult movements.(37)

Vintras died in December of 1875 and one of his controversial priests, Abbe Boullan, who had earlier that year been defrocked by the orthodox church, declared himself his successor.(38) Boullan is perhaps most famous for the supposed magical cause of his death in 1893. The "Work of Mercy" had been fighting the forces of evil marshalled all around it for decades. These forces had come to include the Roman Catholic Church, but also other occultists now engaged in what "the Work" held to be "black magic." Then, as now, these sinister forces tend to reside not in the objective universe, but in the paranoid fantasies of the accusers.

In any event there was a cadre of occultists of darker aspect active in France in the late 19th century. This group became the target of the accusations of the self-proclaimed "white magicians" of the "Work of Mercy."

The principal two occultists of this kind active in France at that time were Josephin Péladan (1858-1918) and Stanislas de Guaita (1860-1898). It will become clear that neither of these is a true left-hand path magician, nor a Satanist— merely eccentric and decadent.

Péladan was the son of a school-master who edited a fanatically pro-royalist and Catholic paper (*Le Chatiment*). The father also made somewhat of a business of his mystical speculations about the "sixth wound of Christ" (made on his shoulder by the cross when he fell on the way to Golgotha)— there was a trade built up selling religious trinkets commemorating this new found wound. His brother was a homeopathic healer and cabalist. Péladan ran afoul of the law as a protester against decrees banning unauthorized religious congregations in 1880. In 1883 he went to Paris and entered artistic circles. He held himself to be ultra-orthodox and at the same time a "magician"— by which he meant "someone who is totally in control of himself."(39) In 1884 he published his major work *La vice supreme*.

De Guaita had also come to Paris in 1880 and made his reputatiou as a poet and writer. He published *La muse noire* in 1882. As a result of Péladan's book, de Guaita met him in

1884 and the two formed an alliance that would last until 1890. In 1888 the two in partnership founded the *Odre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*. De Guaita was greatly inspired by Baudelaire, whom he identified as the "Satanist" poet. It seems to be Baudelaire's use of drugs which most influenced de Guaita, who used morphine, cocaine, as well as hashish in his "occult" experiments. De Guaita also cultivated eccentric habits which drew attention to himself— he slept by day, only went out at night, his apartment was draped in red and he usually dressed in robes of that color as well.(40) Certainly de Guaita is most famous for having been accused of causing the death of Abbe Boullan by magical assassination in 1893. This accusation was probably nothing more than paranoid rumors. De Guaita himself denied it and on the contrary was on record in his book *Serpent of Genesis* as condemning the Vintras sect and the Abbe Boullan as being "Satanic."(41) In the final analysis it seems we have nothing more than a paranoid fanatic and a drug deluded aesthete playing a game of "you're one too!"

In 1890 Péladan broke with de Guaita and subsequently founded his own independent *Rose-Croix Catholique*— a break referred to as "the War of the Two Roses." Péladan adopted the Assyrian title and name "Sar Merodack"— King Marduk. He began to issue mandates to the world — especially to the artistic and occult worlds — which was only fitting his new-found stature as king. The Sar conjured a highly original and creative synthesis of occultism and Catholic tradition. No matter how outre the Sar's behaviors or theories became he was unable and unwilling to put his fanatical Catholicism behind him. It was his purpose "'to restore the cult of the IDEAL' through the depiction of Beauty and on the basis of tradition." Péladan's *Rose-Croix* organization had widespread influence among artists in Paris.

The Sar's order did not survive his death in 1918. De Guaita died in 1898— blind and shattered in body and mind— no doubt an end hastened by his brand of "pharmaceutical occultism." However, his order was continued by Gerard Encause (who wrote under the name "Papus") until his own death in 1917.

The Bohemian or Decadent artistic movement runs parallel to the occult revival taking place in Europe during the same time period. As much as these aesthetes loathed the modern age they were utterly the product of it and their "magic" was essentially a modern— albeit a "Romantic" one. The Decadents, by using every artistic medium of communication available to them, sought to undermine the positivistic, rational-materialism which had come to dominate the upper levels of western civilization by the latter half of the 19th century. They, however, fought this battle on a field defined by the positivists— in the world of the senses.

Le Diable au XIXe Siecle: Leo Taxil and the Anarchistic Art of Hoaxing

In the latter half of the 19th century, especially in France, the Devil had become a figure of enormous entertainment value, and a symbol of spiritual and political rebellion (especially among fanatic or conservative Catholics). "Black Masses" were performed in Paris as dramatic tourist attractions and the figure of the Devil — then as now — was always good for the raising of sensationalistic expectations. But since the issuance of the *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864 conservative Catholics also had a new impetus for considering all forms of progressivism and change as essentially diabolical in origin.

Freemasonry had been especially identified by the church as a Satanic force. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Humanum genus* (1879) claimed Freemasonry inteuded to overthrow Christianity and re-establish paganism. A Jesuit Archbishop wrote *La franc-maconnerie, synagoge de Satan* in which it was claimed that the Grand Master of the lodge in Charleston, South Carolina was the Vicar of Satan and that it was the intention of Masonry to destroy Christianity and establish a Satanic Empire.(42)

The two tendencies to see "Satanism" as both high entertainment and a serious threat to the establishment were woven together in one of the most elaborate hoaxes in history— the

apparent purpose of which was the exposure and weakening of the conservative cause. The means used for this operation were the popular press and popular literature on the subject of Satanism. The ironic thing is that much of the literature created for this hoax — or campaign of disinformation — or derivations from it, is still being used today in lurid descriptions of supposed Satanic goings-on.

The master mind of the hoax was Gabriel Jogand-Pages, who wrote under the name Leo Taxil (as well as Dr. Bataille). Jogand was born in 1854 and began his education under the Jesuits— but began to call himself a "freethinker" by the age of 14. He was exposed to the ideas of Masonry through a book he obtained from a friend at school. His rebelliousness eventually led him to try to run away to Italy— but as punishment of this he was sent to a juvenile prison for eight months by his father. This incident was apparently further fuel for his sense of rebellion against authority throughout his life.(43)

In 1870 he joined the military and served in Algeria. After this he began to publish anti-clerical and Republican journals in his native Marseille— for this he was convicted of, and fined for, "blasphemy and outrages against religion." But his journalistic subversion continued nevertheless.

1878 saw his move to Paris where he founded radical journals of tremendous popularity. By 1881 he actually joined a Freemasonic lodge. He spent a total of 12 months in the brotherhood and must not have been very highly initiated— but by this time most Masonic "secrets" were available to the learned public anyway. But after his departure he "mysteriously" began to write exposes of the sinister secrets of Masonry and began to make alliances with clerical forces. In 1887 he published *The Confessions of a Freethinker* which won him an audience with Pope Leo XIII.

"Taxil" then proceeded to *create* and publish anti-clerical and anti-Catholic literature— including periodicals ostensibly emanating from the Satanic "Palladium." First he set about fabricating the personality of Diana Vaughn— supposedly the descendant of a line going back to a union between the English alchemist Thomas Vaughn and the goddess Astarte! Diana Vaughn finished up her career as a fictional character when Arthur Machen borrowed the name for a character in "The Great God Pan."

While creating the artificial reality of the "Palladians" and their head "Diana Vaughn" Taxil was also busy publishing exposes of the Satanic cult. In 1887 he claimed that Diana Vaughn was now in hiding from the Palladists— but could not show herself for fear of reprisals. He exhorted good Catholics to pray and have masses said for her conversion from her religion of evil to the true Church. For *ten more years* Jogand/Taxil would exploit this hoax. He had Diana finally "convert" to Roman Catholicism— and even had her writing devotional literature which was praised by the Pope himself! In 1892 Jogand issued his *magnum opus* under the name Dr. Bataille called *Le Diable au XIXe Siecle*. "Dr. Bataille" was another alternate persona used by Jogand— sometimes to whip up the Satanic scare, sometimes to decry it as a fraud. Jogand was, by the way, aided in his work by his female secretary who in fact was the actual writer of some of the "Diana Vaughn" material.(44)

Jogand/Taxil was indeed a magnificent sorcerer. He spun a web of mass illusion at the highest ranks of society for well over a decade. But right after Easter 1897 he called down the final curtain. Diana Vaughn was set to appear for the first time in person before an audience gathered at the Geographic Society in Paris— but only Jogand appeared. He read a statement to the crowd in which the whole hoax was laid out.(45) He had made fools of the masses in demonstrating that they were ready to believe the most outrageous neo-medieval nonsense imaginable!

Although apologists would try to claim that all the revelations about the Satanic Palladium, Masonry and all the rest were really true— and that Jogand had been "bought off" by the evil conspirators to "confess" that he had made it all up— an "explanation" that even further stretches credibility — a more likely interpretation is that Jogand was practicing a form of journalistic sorcery— and anarchy — at the expense of the Church and

the Masons both. He was just continuing his life-long rebellion against authority of all kinds.

The story of 19th century French "satanism" is important to us because it sets the stage for subsequent developments in the left-hand path in America in the late 20th century. The interweaving of religiou and philosophy with art and entertainment would be a hallmark of the LaVeyan Satanism of the 1960s and 1970s. In the final analysis, however, there is little in the world of French Decadence of the late 19th century which can be seen as furthering the philosophical aims of left-hand path philosophies. Because they tended to hang onto medieval imagery — conditioned by their thoroughly Catholic cultural milieu — the French Satanists (of fact and fiction) actually seem to have retarded the renewal of the philosophy of the Transcendental Branch of the Left-Hand Path in the west. But at the same time they provided the heart and soul of the *imagery* upon which the redevelopment of the Immanent Branch of the path would rest.

The Red Devil

While the Satan of the Decadents and the Neo-Romantics was being manifested in the world of the arts, another image of Satan was being revalued in the political sphere. The Satan of Judeo-Christian tradition— as developed by Milton and the Romantics — was a highly suitable symbol or embodiment of rebellion in the revolutionary period of the mid-19th century. Even the materialist/positivist revolutionaries saw Satan as a hero of sorts.

Almost in a revival of the ancient debate between Epicureans and Stoics, the mid-19th century saw the growth of a new form of materialism (which had been theoretically pioneered by La Mettrie and de Sade) but which was now projected into the world of economic and political action. In essence, however, the assertion that the material universe is all that exists and any notion of a metaphysical realm is purely an aberration or delusion is in and of itself a matter of faith in something unseen or unapparent. Radical materialism is in practice just as "mystical" as spiritualism, and history has shown that it is no more "scientific" than theology and not nearly as effective.

The materialists of the 19th century were uniformly revolutionaries— intellectual as well as political — rebels. They revolted against an establishment universally wrapped up in the mantle of religious authority. God Almighty, King of Heaven, ruled there as the Czar, Kaiser, or King ruled in Russia, Prussia, or England. It is therefore not surprising that when and if their thoughts were couched in Biblical metaphors they might tend to show an overwhelming amount of sympathy for the Devil.

Whether it was the communism of Marx, the anarchism of Bakunin, or the Bolshevism of Lenin each had their special relationships with the Devil and each saw him as they saw themselves— cast in the glow of a red light. In their minds the battle lines were drawn between the spiritual and material, the bourgeois and proletariat, the "haves" and the "have-nots."

The Devil and Karl Marx

For conservatives over the past century and a half or more the ideas of revolutionary communism have been virtually synonymous with a cosmic Satanic conspiracy— from Pope Pius IX to John Birch and beyond. Before these apparent ravings are dismissed out of hand, we might find it interesting to explore the philosophies of Marx and other socialist/materialist thinkers from a left-hand path viewpoint.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) did not invent communism or historical materialism, but he was an original synthesizer and codifier of a range of philosophical, economic and socio-political ideas into a theoretically coherent whole. This ideology could then be more forcefully disseminated than had been the case with the loose association of concepts that marked related pre-Marxist movements.

Marx was born in Trier, Germany on 5 May 1818 to an ethnically Jewish family.(46) His father, Heinrich, had converted to Lutheranism just the year before. Karl was brought up entirely in the Lutheran faith. In 1835 he went to study law at the university of Bonn, but transferred to Berlin the following year where he was quickly "converted" to

philosophy under the influence of the "Young Hegelians," a group of intellectuals engaged in the transformation of Hegel's historical idealism into historical materialism.

Marx had planned to become a university lecturer. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the philosophy of Epicureanism. But by 1841 the Prussian government clamped down on the Hegelian left, which caused all job prospects for Marx to evaporate. Back in the western part of Germany, in Saarbrücken, Marx met a communistic Zionist publicist named Moses Hess who was able to "convert" him to a communist philosophy. Hess was also responsible for converting Friedrich Engels, Marx' future collaborator. Marx soon became the editor of a liberal newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which he quickly radicalized. In April 1843, the paper was suppressed by the government and Marx emigrated to Paris. He was expelled from France in 1845, eventually settling in England in 1849. The year before, in 1848, he wrote one of his two major works — in collaboratiou with Engels — *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. He was to live the rest of his life in relatively obscure circumstances in London.

In 1864 the "First International" — or more precisely the International Workingman's Association — was organized in London. This was a federation of unions and radical organizations. Marx was able to exert his influence on this group. In place of nationally organized and loosely affiliated, vaguely liberal unions, Marx imposed his vision of an international, disciplined and federated, radical organization bent ou the utter destruction of capitalist society. Because of his authoritarian principles Marx was opposed in the International by the almost equally prestigious Mikail Bakunin.

1867 saw the publication of the first volume of Marx' *magnum opus*: *Capital* (*Das Kapital*). By this time his thought had reached its full maturity and he could only defend the doctrines he had already developed. His support for the short-lived violently insurgent government in France in 1871, known as "the Commune," earned for Marx the popular title of "the Red Terrorist Doctor."

Due largely to the chaotic influence of Bakunin in the organization, the International died in obscurity in Philadelphia in 1876. In his latter years Marx developed closer ties with Russian communists. But before these ties could be exploited, he died in London on 14 March 1883. He is buried in Highgate Cemetery. It would be over three decades before his theories would begin to be put into practical use after the Russian revolution of 1917.

Marx' attitude toward traditional religion was that it is "the opiate of the masses." However, it is equally clear that he intended his philosophy to be a total replacement for religion. His antipathy toward religion began shortly after he began his university studies. He and his associates at the *Doktorklub* — the Young Hegelians of Berlin — set out on an atheistic program to destroy the superstructure of conservative authority, which they saw in religion. Although he later concentrated on certain economic theories coupled with historical materialism, the young Marx had a vision of the "total redemption of humanity,"(47) as he wrote in the introductiou to his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844). The whole of Marx' philosophy has been seen as a sort of "prophetic politics"(48) in which a total transformation of the world is envisioned— and then promoted.

The early ideas of Marx — in which the roots of his motivations may be found — have been analyzed as being Faustian/Promethean by at least one scholar.(49) Even the casual observer will have noticed the quasi-religious features of Marxism both as a theory and as it has been practiced in various countries in the 20th century. This perhaps has its origins in the nature of Marx' own initial impetus during his Berlin period. All this is best revealed in his own early, pre-communist, writings, e.g. the epic drama *Oulanem* (1837) and his poetry. In one of these poems, "The Fiddler" ["*Der Spielmann*"] (1841), he writes:

Was, was! Ich stech', stech' ohne fehle
Blutschwarz den Sabel in Deine Seele,
  Gott kennt sie nicht, Gott acht' nicht der Kunst
  Die stieg in den Kopf aus Höllendunst,
Bis das Hirn vernarrt, bis das Herz verwandelt:
Die hab' ich lebendig vom Schwarzen erhandelt.
  Der schlägt mir den Takt, der kreidet die Zeichen;
  muss voller, toller den Todtenmarsch streichen...
(ll. 17-24)

Behold, my blood-blackened saber shall stab
Without fail into your heart.
  God neither knows nor does he honor art.
  It rises into the brain as vapors from Hell.
Until I brain is deluded and my heart transformed:
I bought it while still alive from the Dark-One.
  He beats the time for me, he gives the signs;
  must more boldly, madly rush in the March of Death...

It is curious that even toward the end of his life overtly Satanic images were used to describe him, even by his close associates. His son-in-law Paul Lafargue said of him: "... he himself was known as the Moor or Old Nick on account of his dark complexion and sinister appearance."(50)

In the final analysis Marxism is a system of mystical materialism. He posits that history has an organic structure and that its evolution is driven not by the mind of God, as Hegel would have had it, but by exclusively material considerations, e.g. purely economic determination or human behavior and the change caused by struggles between economically determined classes in society. Throughout all of history classes of people — as determined essentially by economic status — who were without power would, by the inevitable force of the historical dialectic, wrest power away from those who have it at present. Thus the proletariat would, by the sheer force of history, overcome the over-ripe capitalist establishment.

Marx claimed that his theories were purely "scientific" or rationally based, that he merely had the clearest view of historical change and its causes. But as it turns out his work had an effect less like a prophesy and more like a sorcerous incantation. Essentially Marx' view of history appears uncannily like that of Judeo-Christian tradition— only its causal agent has been revaluated from "God's Plan" to "historical dialectic." In the former there is an initial Edenic period, broken by man's transgression against God's law. This is followed by a long period of tribulation ended first by the incarnation of the Messiah who brings the program for salvation — the Evangelium — which is to be enacted by his earthly followers (the Church). Once this program has been spread world-wide, evil will be vanquished and a new paradise will be established on earth. The Christian version of this is, of course, highly spiritualized, while the Judaic remains largely materialistic. The Marxist view similarly posits an early period of primitive communism, broken by the institution of private property (= Original Sin) and slave labor. This is followed by successive economic stages of feudalism and capitalism. The beginning of the end of the capitalistic phase is heralded by Marxist theory as a program for "redemption" — historical dialectic — which is to be enacted by socialist revolutionaries (the International). Once revolution is spread world-wide, capitalism will be vanquished and the classless, perfected Communist society will be established on earth. Such parallels between Marxist and Christian and/or Judaic views of history have also been posited by several scholars in the past.(51)

Although Marxist theory may be increasingly discredited as political systems based upon it fail and prove to be programs for ever more inefficient and intolerant systems than those the theory was designed to overthrow, elements of Marxist thinking have definitely

permeated into popular political culture in the form of such things as notions of "political correctuess." The concept of "political correctness" (even the connotations of the phrase) stems from Marxist orthodoxy and is based on the premise that there is an ongoing struggle by a variety of suppressed groups who are at present viewed as being relatively powerless, e.g. women, African Americans, Hispanics, the physically challenged. It is their collective aim (each group individually) to wrest socioeconomic power from those who have it at present. This is Marx' "class struggle." Furthermore, those groups are assured by Marxist theory of fighting the good fight, the moral fight, because the historical dialectic (or the Marxist "God") is on their side. Their morality and their future victory is assured by the very fact that they are *currently* powerless. This is why, for example, blacks cannot be considered "racists," or womeu "sexists," at least according to this theory based in the Marxist historical dialectic.

— The Anarchistic Devil —

"If God really existed it would be necessary to abolish him."

- Mikail Bakunin

In his fragmentary work, *God and the State*, the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) at one point assesses humanity in terms of the Edenic myth and says: "[Satan] makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge."(52) As Bakunin saw it, humanity — as an essentially bestial creature — was "endowed in a higher degree than the animals of any other species with two precious faculties— *the power to think and the desire to rebel.*" His understanding of humanity— his *anthropology* — held that collectively and individually the development of man was characterized by three principles: human *animality, thought* and *rebellion.*

For Bakunin Satan is "the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and emancipator of worlds."(53) Like most anarchists who derive much of their theory from Roussseau's idea of the "noble savage," civilization and its institutions are the chief evils in the world. They must be struck down so that the innate nobility of humanity may emerge as a matter of natural course once freed of all socially determined conventions.

Bakunin was himself more an activist revolutionary than a writer or philosopher— he said "I have no system, I am a seeker." He is said to have had a love for the mysterious and the irrational. This put him at odds with those he called "doctrinaire communists" who followed the more systematic philosophy of Marx. Both of these philosophies are, however, based on a positivistic materialism. "God" was firmly identified with the idea of "spirit," so the Devil, God's opposite, must be — if we choose to use this language — tantamount to the idea of matter. The property of "intelligence" can be ascribed to matter due to its "dynamic nature and evolutionary quality," according to Bakunin.(54)

This dichotomizing of "matter" and "spirit" (or "intelligence") is, of course, typical of the modern era. Where such dichotomies can be generated one must be accepted, the other rejected, or so goes conventional thought. All this is modern, all-too-modern. From a left-hand path perspective it is perhaps interesting to remember that ancient Hebrew mythology identified as "Satanic" *both* the existence of the flesh (nature/matter) and the presence of intelligence (as a result of rebellion).

While the ideas of Bakunin lived on in a vague obscurity — and continue to do so today among all those who oppose authority in all its forms — the ideas of Marx have had a much more doctrinaire and institutionalized history. This history was to be played out not in the industrialized capitalist strongholds of western Europe but in the still largely feudalistic, pre-industrial Russia.

The Bolsheviks and the "Empire of Evil"

The Slavs in general, and the Russians in particular, have a special place in their national traditions for the Devil or devils. Russian popular religion on the very eve of the 1917 Revolution was still a mixture of orthodoxy and rural demonology(55) — there was indeed still a true "dual faith" (Rus. *dvoeverie*). This only goes to show how

extraordinarily conservative (in the sense of holding onto archaic cultural traditions) the Russian peasant was. The structure of this faith remained virtually unchanged from the period of the conversion of the Russians to Orthodoxy nine centuries before.

But beside the "normal" culturally conservative peasants who believed in the magical power of saints (who embodied their old Slavic gods) and the powers of devils great and small, there was a variety of extraordinary sects or cults in late 19th and early 20th century Russia which must be understood in order to comprehend the spiritual dimension of the phenomenon of Bolshevism.

Most of these sects rejected orthodox spirituality in favor of their own teachings many of which were heavily tinged with Gnosticism and most of which held out the promise of the advent of an earthly paradise— as opposed to the more orthodox promise of a heavenly one. Many of these sects were rationalistic and materialistic in their ideas and prophesied a time when mankind — as a collective entity — would become god-like. Sects such as the Raskolnik, the Molokans, Duchohorzis, Stundists, Neo-Stundists, the Nyemolyaki (non-prayers), Medalyshchiki and Nyeplatelshchiki (non-tax-payers) and several others all taught of the evils of private property and the Russian Orthodox Church. They were for the universal brotherhood of humanity, the advent of an earthly paradise in the name of true Christianity. They were against the privilege of private property, the Orthodox Church— and Satan.(56)

Other, perhaps better known, sects in Russia at this time include the Khlysti ("whippers") and the Skoptsi ("mutilated") who grew out of them. The Khlysti practiced a libertine form of mysticism which involved flagellation and sexual orgies. The Skoptsi, however, believed in extreme asceticism and practices of corporeal mortification— including mutilation of the sexual organs and amputation of limbs. Their leader was typically believed to be the reincarnation of Christ— and sometimes the Czar would "humor" them by crucifying them on the Kremlin wall!(57) These sects compare very favorably with tendencies present in Gnostic cults from the first few centuries of the Common Era.(58)

It seems likely that the famous rogue holy-man, Grigori Y. Rasputin, was closely allied with the teachings of the Khlysti— at least in spirit. However, most hard evidence — such as his own writings — points to him being a rather naive, simple peasant in most of his outlook on life. Surely he was no follower of the left-hand path.(59) This despite the fact that he is listed as one of the major influences on Anton LaVey on the dedication page of the *Satanic Bible* and despite the popular image of him as a "devil worshipper." Often the myth, or *image*, of a man in history far outweighs any factual data on him.

It is into this mixture of widespread popular demonology, sects preaching the advent of "heaven on earth" and cults practicing extreme forms of libertinage and asceticism that the Bolsheviks of V. I. Lenin step upon the stage of Russian history.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924) founded the Bolshevik (majority members) faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' party in London in 1903. This wing opposed the Menshevik (minority members) faction. Lenin, born Ulyanov, became a Marxist revolutionary after the execution of his brother who was implicated in a plot to assassinate the Czar. Lenin was later arrested and sent to Siberia in 1895. In 1900 he fled to western Europe to organize socialism internationally. In 1905 he returned to Russia to participate in the abortive revolution of that year, but fled again in 1907. Lenin returned to Russia after the outbreak of the 1917 revolution in March of that year— and led the Bolshevik overthrow of the provisional government in November (October in the old style Russian calendar). As chairman of the Council of People's Commissars he became the virtual dictator of Russia. From then to his death in 1924 Lenin worked to establish the professional revolutionaries of the Bolshevik party as the ruling elite of the country, while suppressing all internal opposition to himself and working to spread communist revolution world-wide. One of his closest associates was Joseph Stalin.

Lenin's opponents often saw in him the Antichrist.(60) Certainly he was an "apocalyptic" figure who attempted to transform a whole culture in a very short period of time. He was as successful as he was because of his mystical vision of a primitive culture transformed into an ultra-modern, electrified, totally efficient machine. *The Machine* was Lenin's god.

Each individual worker or peasant — each individual human being — was essentially a machine, and so too was the collective entity of all workers and peasants. Lenin's inner task was to make the whole work as an efficient, perfected machine. This is why science and technology were virtually sanctified in Soviet Russia. The New Man, the New Machine — the *Homo Sovieticus* — would be created from the scientific communist programs of the Bolsheviks. These programs were indeed set into motion by the party. These activities amounted to the dismantlement of orthodox religion replaced by the new faith of Communism.

The Rites and Rituals of Bolshevism

No source informs us more about the early cultural history of Soviet Russia then Fülöp-Miller's *Face and Mind of Bolshevism* (1926). We can expect more internal evidence to surface in the coming years about the quasi-religious and even "magical" aspects of Soviet culture. It is clear that the early Bolsheviks had an extremely radical "plan," implicit in the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, for the transformation of the human species into a collective god-like machine. But *how* was this to be done in practical terms? First, the vestiges of the old system, the bourgeois society and culture, had to be destroyed utterly. As institutions the church and state could be eradicated or controlled in a relatively easy manner— through brute force. But the psychological and cultural (collective psychological) hold of the old ways would require a second phase: the institution of new cultural and quasi-religious forms to replace the old ones.

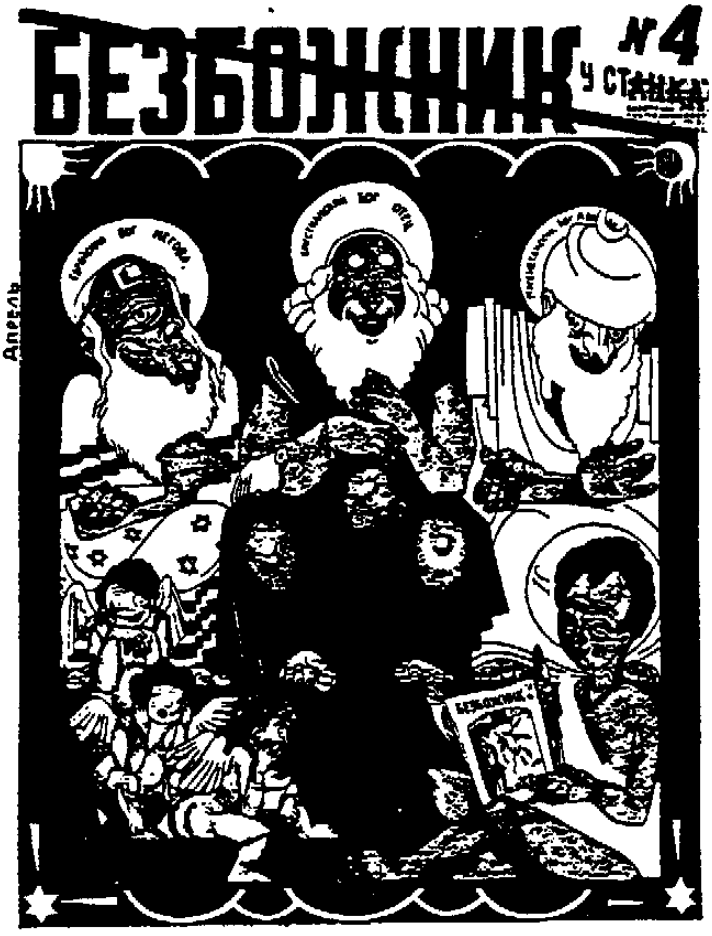


Plate 6.1: Comic Icon from *Bezbozhnik*

In the efforts of the first phase the communist youth organizations, especially the *Komsomol-League*, were instrumental. There were massive campaigns to debunk the Russian Orthodox religion and every cultural aspect of that church. The public was rationally "educated" against belief in icons or the miraculous powers of relics of the saints. In the former effort, for example, comic versions of icons were produced in magazines such as *Bezbozhnik* (*"The Atheist"*), an example of which is reproduced on plate 6.1. "Red Masses" were held in the old churches. These lampooned the orthodox faith with comic mockeries of their ceremonies. Churches were turned into museums of atheism and the hammer and sickle replaced the saltire cross atop the spires. Belief in the curative powers of the miraculously preserved bodies of saints was debunked with rational and scientific explanations of how the bodies were preserved by artificial means. It is rather ironic, but consistent with the nature of cultural continuity, that Lenin's body was preserved the way it was— as a miraculous example of "Soviet Sainthood."

Soon after the revolutions of 1917 the Soviets set out to create a replacement for the "opiate of the masses." The negative campaign against religion in general could only take them so far in transforming the society. Certain rites and customs were created in the time of Lenin to act as positive answers to the human need for such things. There were rites for "baptism," marriage and funeral.

The most interesting of these is that of the baptism, or naming of a new "comrade." The names given to children were sometimes selected by collective action in the factory or party offices. A whole new type of names began being given in Russia— ones that reflected Revolutionary values, e.g. *Revolutia* or *Oktyabrina* (in honor of the "October" revolution) for girls and things such as *Rem* (an acronym for the Russian phrase for "Revolutionary Electrification Program") for boys. The naming was done in a "Red Baptism" presided over by local party secretaries in party facilities. Usually children were named in group ceremonies. The meeting hall was draped in red, the gathered workers sang "The International," hymn of international communism, and the parents swore to bring up the child as a good communist. The official naming was done ceremonially with the words:

> We the undersigned herewith confirm that into the union of the Socialist Soviet Republic a new citizen _____ (here the first and last names are inserted) has been received. As it is that we give to you your name in honor of _____ (here an explanation of the socialist significance of the first name is given), we greet you as a future worker and founder of Communist society. May the ideals of Communism henceforth form the content of your long-lasting life! May you become one of those who will lead the great task of the proletariat to its conclusion! You shall step beneath the red flag! Long live the new revolutionary citizen!(61)

The Soviets thought that the new, younger generation would be the true transformers of humanity. Instrumental in this transformation of the species would be a new sexual morality. Until the advent of Stalinism there was a red sexual revolution following in the wake of the political revolution. Both marriage and divorce were made easier— with no involvement with ecclesiastical sacraments. Abortions were also easily available, but not encouraged. Certain aspects of the new red sexuality suggest possible links with the Khlysti sect— at least in spirit.

In *Pravda* a female ideologue, Smidovich, published an article on this new morality pertaining especially to the young members of the *Komsomol*. She wrote that the more primitive ("animalistic") the rules of conduct for sexual life are, the more Communistic they are. The youth must not place restrictions on their sexuality. No female should refuse the sexual advances of a male member of the *Komsomol*. In the *Komsomol* itself orgies, called "African Nights" were organized in which there were approximately 70 percent men and 30 percent women.(62)

These institutions did not survive the development of Stalinism.

Lenin only lived to 1924— at which time Joseph Stalin (179-1953) began to consolidate his power from his position as General Secretary of the Communist Party. By 1929, with the exile of Leon Trotsky, Stalin's hold on ideological power was complete. Stalin reinstated a high level of cultural conservatism and virtually every shred of the *avant garde* characteristics of the Revolution was suppressed. To his citizens Stalin became a devil incarnate perhaps liquidating as many of his countrymen as were killed in the "Great Patriotic War" with the Germans. Any and all popular deviations from the strict, atheistically puritanical code of Stalinist authoritarianism became impossible.

The demise of the Soviet system in the early 1990s indicates nothing more than the failure of one more totalitarian regime to sustain the common welfare. The theoretically Marxist-Leninist line of thought was utterly (if covertly) rejected by Stalin during his tenure as Soviet dictator. For all intents and purposes the Marxist-Leninist experiment died in the Stalinist purges. What replaced it was the ever-popular form of simple tyranny.

From a left-hand path perspective there are essentially two kinds of political structures. One is the tyrannical structure in which the leader is virtually deified (or demonized) and worshipped. In such a structure the only possible practitioner of the left-hand path would be the leader him- or herself— all others would have to practice the right-hand path value system of self-annihilation before the will of the leader. The second left-hand path political structure involves the relative deification of a variety of individuals in various spheres of influence. With each individual epicenter of consciousness on the perimeter of other surrounding spheres.

Both structures have their representatives. The latter structure is more complex and subtle, of course. It is seen in the models of pagan antiquity (whether that of the national traditions, Indian tantrism, or Platonic systems) and in modern organizations such as the Temple of Set. The former mode is more evident in modern movements of ideological or political totalitarianism where the leader understands himself to be the universal "god" — or standard — of the "world" in which he reigns. This is usual in many occult organizations. This is often the case among modern Satanic groups such as the Church of Satan in which the personality of Anton LaVey defined its essence *in toto*.

The question as to the true left-hand path significance of Marxist theory and practice is fairly clear. Theoretically, Marxism assumes a possible perfection (deification) of humanity *as a species*. But this perfection is only possible on a collective, not individualized, basis. The nature of this collective is determined by materialistic/economic criteria and the process of perfection is governed by a transpersonal force in history. That the human can become (a) god is essentially a left-hand path premise, but that the process by which this occurs is *collective* and *not willed* (but inevitable) takes the ideology out of any ultimate consideration as a left-hand path system. Plato or Pythagoras would have told Marx that any deification must be based on *individuality*. It is perhaps this truth that Lenin and Stalin realized in their final stages of personal development.

"Collective perfection" is a notion inherited from Judaic and perhaps Iranian ideology. The idea that a selected *group* of humans will gain knowledge, power and immortality passes into institutionalized Christianity and can be found in "political" ideologies such as Marxism or National Socialism. Such ideologies are always dependent on *linear* models of history— the group as a whole must progress through time until the advent of collective perfection (or "salvation"). For the National Socialist (Nazi) or Jew (from whom the Nazi

derived the idea) the collective is deified in terms of an ethnic group. For the Marxist or Christian the collective is determined on a more voluntary, ethical, basis. But it is also somehow "predestined" (by historical dialectic here, by "God's Plan" there). A comprehensive analysis of "Satanic politics" still awaits some future investigator.

— The Will to Power —
Nietzsche: the Antichrist

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is a philosopher with a sinister reputation. For the most part this is because Hitler is supposed to have liked him. This is also why Richard Wagner is an "evil composer." If they were capable of perceiving the truth, the popular pundits responsible for such ludicrous reasoning would have much more to fear from both of these men than even they can imagine.

Nietzsche's objectively productive period spanned from 1972, when *Birth of Tragedy* was published, to 1889 when he becomes either insane or divine. (After this time he referred to himself with a variety of "divine epithets" including Dionysius, "the Crucified and Apollo.) Among his last works was *The Antichrist*(63) which was a full-force frontal attack on Christianity. In an early section of that book, he writes:

> What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself.
>
> What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness.
>
> What is happiness? The feeling that power is *growing*, that resistance is overcome. Not contentedness but more power, not peace but war, not but fituess (Renaissance virtue, *virtu*, virtue that is moraline-free).
>
> The weak and the failures will perish: first principle of *our* love of man. And they shall be given every possible assistance.
>
> What is more harmful than any vice? Active pity for all the failures and all the weak: Christianity.

The comprehensive philosophy of Nietzsche is too complex to discuss extensively in this forum. His cosmology was an entirely materialistic one, and his view of man one that would be closely imitated by Anton LaVey. Man's only distinction from "other animals" is his ability to build "horizons"— to overcome limitations imposed upon him and which he imposes on himself.

Most mysterious of Nietzsche's ideas is his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence— *ewige Wiederkehr.*(64) It was *this* idea which he himself thought was the essence of his teaching. Three ideas — the Will to Power, the Overman and Eternal Recurrence — are bound together in a Mysterious triad. Recurrence is the law, Will is the method and the Overman the ainn.

Nietzsche saw himself, and those who would *understand* him, as "Hyperboreans" — those of the ultimate north — ones separated from the rest of humanity by their characters. They are to be *Übermenschen*— "over-men," those who have "overcome by going-under" (See *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 1.) Nietzsche's philosophy is based on the force of the empowerment of the individual Will, or consciousness. It is a philosophy of *Diesseitigkeit*— "this-sided-ness." It is the individual, carnal ego which is to empower its will in order to become the *Übermensch.* This evolution into the Overman — this "self-deification" — takes place under the direction of the Will. Essential to the *technique* of Nietzsche's active philosophy is the *Umwertung aller Werte*: "the Revaluation of all Values." This virtually defines a modern school of secular antinomianism instituted for the sake of the evolution of the Will into a unique and potent entity.

Obviously many of Nietzsche's ideas correspond to the philosophy of the left-hand path. That which seems to be lacking is a theory of "magic" and a system of "initiation." But his ideas were to be developed in this direction by such magical philosophers as

Aleister Crowley (who seems to have based his philosophy on Nietzsche's Will to Power), P. D. Ouspensky, Gregor A. Gregorius and Anton LaVey.

From the tune of the Renaissance, the dawn of the Modern Age, there has been a steady development toward secularization, rationalism, and even materialism within the establishment of western culture. This has manifested itself in everything from the growth of free-trade capitalism, to representational democracy, to "secular humanism," to Marxist political theory. But at the same time during the course of the most recent and accelerated phase of modernism (from about 1880 to the present) there has been a growing "occult revival" running below the surface of established norms. In this counter-cultural phenomenon the keys to the current manifestations of the left-hand path can be found. It will be found too that these keys help unlock many mysteries housed in the establishment culture which were in many cases spawned from intersections of modernist rationalism and occultist magic and mysticism.

Notes for Chapter 6

(1) The so-called Children's Crusade occurred in 1212 CE and involved the rounding up of thousands of children to be sent to "fight" in the Holy Land (they would be invulnerable in battle because of their innocence). Merchants hired to transport the boys and girls took them from Marseille to Alexandria, where they were sold into slavery.

(2) On the revival of paganism in the Renaissance, see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

(3) William Fleming, *Arts and Ideas* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1986, 7th ed.), pp. 221-223.

(4) Printed by Ernst Cassierer, et al. eds. *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 193-212.

(5) See Cassierer, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 223-254.

(6) Cassierer, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 225.

(7) Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*. trans. T. G. Bergin. (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1947), p. 50.

(8) Eric Towers, *Dashwood: The Man and the Myth* (Wellingborough, UK: Crucible, 1986), pp. 13-21; 231-246.

(9) Mark Blackett-Ord, *Hell-Fire Duke: The Life of the Duke of Wharton* (Windsor Forest, UK: Kensal Press, 1982), p. 46.

(10) Blackett-Ord, *Hell-Fire Duke*, pp. 44ff.

(11) Towers, pp. 130-131)

(12) Towers, *Dashwood*, p. 148.

(13) Towers, *Dashwood*, pp. 219-220.

(14) Towers *Dashwood*, pp. 160ff.

(15) Towers, *Dashwood*, p. 146.

(16) Thomas Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth [= The Jefferson Bible]* (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson, 1902).

(17) Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1984. [1794-1795]).

(18) Paine, *Age of Reason*, p. 15.

(19) See Jean Paulhan's introduction to *The Marquis de Sade: The Complete Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom* (New York: Grove, 1966), pp. 8-11.

(20) Geoffrey Gorer, *The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade* (London: Peter Owen, 1953, 2nd ed.), pp. 89-96.

(21) De Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, pp. 211-212.

(22) Marquis de Sade, *Juliette* (New York: Grove, 1968), pp. 765-798.

(23) For a discussion of this passage see Gorer, *Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade*, p. 180.

(24) See Gorer, *Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade*, p. 171-185.

(25) Gorer, *Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade*, p. 187.

(26) R-M. S. Heffner, et al. eds, *Goethe's Faust* (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1954), p. 31.

(27) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 30.

(28) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 31.

(29) Heffner, *Goethe's Faust*, p. 31.

(30) See Emma Jung, *The Grail Legend* (Boston: Sigo, 1986), pp. 150-151.

(31) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (New York: Colonial, 1935).

(32) Jeffery B. Russell, *Mephistopheles* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 168-213.

(33) June Singer, *The Unholy Bible* (New York: Putnam, 1970).

(34) James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974), p. 163.

(35) Henry T.F. Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, [1954]), pp. 156-162.

(36) Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, p. 164.

(37) Webb, *Underground*, p. 141-144.

(38) Webb, *Underground*, p. 156.

(39) Webb, *Underground*, p. 169.

(40) Webb, *Underground*, pp. 173-174.
(41) Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, p. 169.
(42) Webb, *Underground*, p. 144.
(43) Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, pp. 194 ff.
(44) Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, p. 212.
(45) Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, pp. 209-213.
(46) Isiah, Berlin, *Karl Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 21-22.
(47) Neal Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 64.
(48) See Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics*, 1-20.
(49) Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: I: The Founders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 409; 412; 414.
(50) Berlin, *Karl Marx*, p. 229.
(51) Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics*, p. 11-12.
(52) Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 10.
(53) Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 10.
(54) Bakunin, *God and the State*, pp. 12-13.
(55) Sergei M. Kravchinsky, *The Russian Peasantry: Their Agrarian Condition, Social Life, and Religion*. Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1977 [1888], pp. 57-71.)
(56) René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (London: Putnam, 1927), pp. 100-121.
(57) These are reviewed by Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* in a chapter on secterianism. See also the lurid account by Charles Lefebure, *The Blood Cults* (New York: Ace, 1969), pp. 100-105.
(58) Benjamin Walker, *Gnosticism* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian, 1983), p. 183-184.
(59) See Colin Wilson, *Rasputin* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1964).
(60) Fülöp-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 29.
(61) Fülöp-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*pp. 258-259.
(62) Fülöp-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, pp. 265-266.
(63) Walter Kaufman, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1954), pp. 565-656.
(64) Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 307-333.

Chapter 7
An Interlude in the Absolute Elsewhere: Adolf Hitler and the Modern Mythologizing of Evil

In western culture during this latter part of the 20th century no other man is personally more identified with the idea of *evil* than Adolf Hitler, no symbol more emblematic of evil than the swastika, and no organized body of men more vilified than the "Nazis." In fact it often seems as if Hitler has replaced Satan as the very image of evil in our popular culture. This, to be sure, is in the great historical sweep of things nothing but a passing fad, but it is a present collectively subjective reality.

The origin of this image lies in war-time propaganda produced during and just at the close of the Second World War. Books such as Lewis Spence's *The Occult Causes of the Present War* make claims such as: "From the first Germany has been a region favorable to the suggestions of the powers of evil." (p. 20) Spence goes on to write chapters with titles such as "The Satanic Element in Nazism," "The Satanic Power in Old Germany," "The Satanic Power in Modern Germany," and "Nazism and Satanism." Each chapter contains assertions whose shrillness is exceeded only by their vagueness and obscurity— few written or verifiable sources are ever cited for Spence's information about the Satanic Church that has supposed to have been in control of Germany since time immemorial. But after all none is needed because the work is a work of pure war-time propaganda.

A whole modern mythology of "Nazi Occultism" grew up in the years after the war. This mythology had as its common denominator that the National Socialists were somehow really and truly in cahoots with the Devil in one guise or another and involved in all manner of occult goings on.

The "occult classic" of the 1960s *Le matin du magiciens* (translated into English as *The Morning of the Magicians*) by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier set things in motion with a chapter entitled "A Few years in the Absolute Elsewhere." The contents of this chapter can best, and most charitably be described as an effort in modern mythologizing. Few objective facts are present.

Then in the early 1970s a writer named Trevor Ravenscroft wrote a book entitled *The Spear of Destiny*, which was largely based on the ideas of his teacher Walter Johannes Stein. In an apparently learned style Ravenscroft weaves a tale of reincarnation and evil in which Adolf Hitler is the reincarnation of a historical personage, Landulf II, who was in turn the figure upon whom the character of Clinschor/Klingsor was based in the Parzival/Parsifal legend. The Spear of Destiny, it seems is supposedly the spear used by Longinus to pierce the side of Jesus as he hung on the cross. Because this spear thrust was necessary to fulfill biblical prophesies concerning the divinity of Jesus, it is said that Longinus held the fate of the world in his hands with that spear. So too will any man who holds the spear. It is a talisman of world power. Hitler saw it in its home in the Hofburg in Vienna, and had it brought to Germany after the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1936. Indeed, this spear has many legends attached to it. Including perhaps that of Longinus. However, it can not have been that spear in fact. The spear in question is not of

Roman origin, in fact it was not made until around 700 AD, and is certainly of Longobardic manufacture. (The spear was the royal scepter of the Germanic kings, and the symbolic magical weapon of their high god, Woden.)

Ravenscroft, and perhaps Stein, are shown to have created "facts" out of thin air on many occasions.(1) *The Spear of Destiny*, to put it as charitably as possible, is a work of "poetic" history and/or cosmic propaganda. But its story seemed so compelling that is spawned a whole new wave of "occult Nazi" books, such as *The Occult Reich* (1974), *The Occult and the Third Reich* (1974) and *Satan and Swastika* (1976).

Each of these works has some pet theory to espouse as to just why and how the Nazis were mixed up with "dark forces." The only work to make any sense of this period is Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's study *The Occult Roots of Nazism*. Its only somewhat occult concept is a thinly disguised Marxist theoretical base, but that does not obstruct the facts nearly so markedly as the theories abounding in the other works.

The Facts Behind the Mythos

But why, if the Nazis were not actually involved in the Satanic affairs the propagandists and popularizing occult writers would have you believe, is such mythologizing so appealing and why does it continue to "sell" so well? One of the reasons is that the Nazis did play the role of villains so well— at least as villains were supposed to appear to the Anglo-American world. They wore austere uniforms and had great rituals and indulged in celebrations of vital existence— and were just all very intense. To argue that their practice of exterminating whole populations somehow made them "diabolical" in any traditional sense is absurd. Otherwise we would also have to classify the Roman Catholic Church as being equally "diabolical." That the acts of the Nazis were somehow historically unique is equally absurd— the Stalinists, the Ethiopian Communists, the Khemer Rouge and dozens of other parties, factions and states have carried out similar programs in this century alone.

No, there is something archetypal about the *style* of the Nazis that makes them so singular. This is then combined with a philosophy which is a curious mixture of the barbaric, the medieval Christian and the futuristic scientific to give rise to an image which is singularly out of step with the norms of the 20th century.

Nazi Irrationalism and Paganism

Although among the top Nazi leaders only Himmler and Rudolf Hess ever resigned from their Christian Church affiliations, it is widely believed that the Nazis were heavily involved in neo-Germanic religion (tantamount to diabolism in orthodox Christian circles). This was not really the case.

For many decades Germany had been swept up in a neo-Romantic fever for things *Germanic*. Wagner's operas, especially the *Ring of the Nibelung* tetrology and *Parsifal*, were the rage, Guido von List and others had instituted a new runic mysticism,(2) neo-Germanic religious and cultural groups were springing up all over Germany and Austria from the late 19th through the early 20th century.(3)

The fact is the God of Hitler was *not* Satan or Wotan. When Hitler spoke of his own religious conceptions he spoke entirely in terms of a Christian God (as he understood it). All of Hitler's expressions concerning religion have been collected by Manfred Ach and Clemens Pentrop in their book *Hitlers Religion* (1977). He tolerated — and used — the widespread neo-heathenism in Germany because he thought it provided "unrest" in the populace— unrest which he could use to his own ends. "... These professors and obscure men who found their Nordic religions corrupt the whole thing for me." (4) This is the *documented* reality of the personal attitude of Hitler toward neo-heathen religion. He could hardly be called a Satanist or Wotanist!

As we will see later, the Nazis attempted to institutionalize a new religion based on Party doctrines and given shape by religious and magical pageantry with symbolism drawn from the established churches, but also from Imperial Rome and what they knew of ancient

Germanic cult. It appears that the deeper into the core of the Nazi hierarchy one went the more "pagan" or "magical" things became.

Nazi Medievalism and Science

But the motivating factors for the Nazis' actions are not rooted in magical or pagan ideas— they are rooted in the hatreds and fears first conjured in the Christian Middle Ages. The obsession with the Jews and the belief that they were agents of evil in the midst of the good folk of Germany — and ultimately responsible for every social, political and economic ill suffered by the people — is a thoroughly medieval one. Such ideas were part and parcel of establishment thinking in the Christian Middle Ages. The only direct root for Nazi enmity toward the Jews is in the medieval Christian hatred of them as "Christ killers." The only modern addition to this is that the Nazis now added to the theological argument for the Jews being an "evil race" (an idea Christian Church Fathers introduced) scientific and pseudo-scientific arguments stemming from Darwinist and even Theosophical doctrines.

A careful study of all the facts regarding the true nature of Nazi ideology reveals that the whole "Occult Nazi Mythos" is bogus in character, and misses the whole point of any real Black Magical, or left-hand path aspects that might have been occurring in the National Socialist movement. For the most part the Nazis thought of themselves as being on the on the side of Nature, and their mission was seen as being an entirely "hygienic" one— they would rid Nature and the world of its diseased and degenerate segments and cultivate and nurture the healthy and wholesome wherever they could find it.

Final answers on the actual character of any occult or magical practices undertaken by the Nazis are impossible to arrive at because the records of these, if they ever existed, would have been destroyed at or before the end of the war. In the absence of any hard evidence, we are reduced to inconclusive speculations. The records of Nazi investigations into occult, religious and magical matters that we have can be found in the archive in Koblenz, and in the Library of Congress where photographic copies of that material are stored. A review of that material shows no traces of Satanism or black magic in the usual sense.

The Life of Adolf Hitler
— The Wolf Unbound —

Hitler — whose nick name, or code-name was "Wolf" — was born in Braunau am Inn, Austria on 20 April 1889. The given name "Adolf" means "the Noble Wolf." Evidence indicates a troubled childhood in an authoritarian household. He left school when he was 16 dreaming of becoming a painter. In 1907 he made his way to Vienna where he led a bohemian life-style until 1913.

It was in this Viennese milieu that he received his education in politics and in the racial and perhaps mystical doctrines that would shape his future philosophy. Of course, the hatred of the Jews and the Marxists was an important part of this world view. It was at this time that he was exposed to the doctrines of Lanz von Liebenfels, and perhaps also Guido von List.

In 1913 Hitler moved to Munich, Germany. Shortly thereafter war broke out in Europe and he joined the German army and served courageously on the front. After the war he worked as a domestic spy for the German army. He ended up joining one of the groups he was supposed to investigate — the German Workers' Party — which had about 40 members at the time. The party soon thereafter changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers Party, colloquially known at the "Nazis." By 1921 Hitler had been elected chairman of the party and had personally chosen its symbol: the swastika or *Hakenkreuz.*

By November 1923 Hitler's party and other nationalist groups were ready to try to conduct a Putsch against the Bavarian government. In the resulting street battle 16 of the Nationalists were killed and the *Putsch* failed. Hitler was arrested and sentenced to prison. While in Landsberg prison he dictated his book *Mein Kampf* to his associate Rudolf Hess. There he also underwent a personal transformation from a rabblerouser into a cunning politician.

After nine months in prison he was released. By 1926 he had rebuilt the disintegrated NSDAP. From that time to his final election as Chancellor of Germany in January of 1933 Hitler undertook a relentless campaign of political organization. Once in power he consolidated that power through various maneuvers until he was absolute dictator of Germany by the next year.

Subordinates Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Goering, Josef Goebbels and to a lesser extent Alfred Rosenberg were allowed to control certain aspects or segments of the new, or "Third Reich."

By 1935 Hitler had begun to build up German military power and in 1938 Austria was finally made a part of Greater Germany. he met with success after success in domestic and foreign affairs. The outside world, as well as the Germans seemed to both fear and admire him.

In September of 1939 the Germans invaded Poland using *Blitzkrieg* tactics— and the Second World War was underway. For the first three years of the war, from late 1939 to mid -1942, the Germans were virtually unstoppable. But from the middle of 1942, with the Americans now in the war, the Germans began to suffer defeat after defeat on both the eastern and western fronts. The final moments came for Hitler when he committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin on *Walpurgisnacht,* 1945, with the Red Army entering the now all but flattened city above.

The Life of Heinrich Himmler
— Lord of the Black Knights —

Himmler was born 7 October 1900 in Munich. His father was a pious Roman Catholic school teacher. He served in the German army just at the end of the First World War and from 1918 to 1922 attended the Munich Technical University. During his less than successful business career after this time, he became involved with a nationalist organization and participated in the 1923 *Putsch* led by Hitler and the NSDAP. From 1925 to 1930 he was propaganda leader of the Party, and in 1929 was named leader of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS)— the at that time 200-man body guard of the *Führer*. By 1933 SS membership stood at 52,000.

Himmler envisioned the SS as an elite corps of modern knighthood— who would serve as the cutting edge in the generation of the long awaited superman, or master race. This SS superman would be leader, scholar, warrior and administrator all in one.

The *Reichsführer-SS* was given progressively greater powers during the National Socialist reign. He became the supreme commander of a private army, the *Waffen SS*, was given complete control of all the eastern territories occupied by the German *Reich* and eventually became the head of all political and state police forces both inside and ontside Germany.

The center of Himmler's world-wide SS empire was to be Castle Wewelsburg in Westphalia. There the SS was to have its magical headquarters where the knights of his order would be educated and trained, and where they would hold their rites of chivalry. Other castles, called *Ordensburgen* ("order-castles") were also instituted.

The branch of the SS most responsible for its reputation as an "occult order" is the *Ahnenerbe* ("ancestral heritage") which was instituted to study ancient Germanic culture and religion, including runes, astronomy, architecture and other occult traditions with which Himmler was fascinated.

Himmler's SS became a "state within a state" in Nazi Germany. At the end of the war Himmler attempted to negotiate separately with the Allies in the west in hopes of stabilizing that region so he could carry on the fight in the east. In the final moments of the war when Hitler found out about Himmler's actions the *Führer* denounced him and removed him from his official positions. Shortly after Himmler was captured by the Allies in the west, he committed suicide by means of a poison capsule on 23 May 1945.

Sources for the Study of the Nazis and Magic

The major primary sources for the study of the magical or religious aspects of the National Socialist movement in Germany would be the Ahnenerbe archives, as well as the many official publications of the SS, the Rosenberg Office and other branches of the NSDAP. The most valuable secondary studies have been provided by Klaus Vondung (1971), Michael Kater (1974) and Ulrich Hunger (1984). The roots of what was to become, at least in part, the NS ideology can be studied in the works of Lanz von Liebenfels, Guido von List, and dozens of others. It must be stressed, however, that these neo-Romantic mystics were not "Nazis," nor were their ideologies identical to those of the later Nazis. Some of their ideas were simply used by the founders and developers of NS ideology. One of the most important studies of this aspect is Wilfried Daim's *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab.* (1958). This is an exhaustive treatment of Lanz von Liebenfels and his possible influences on Nazi ideology.

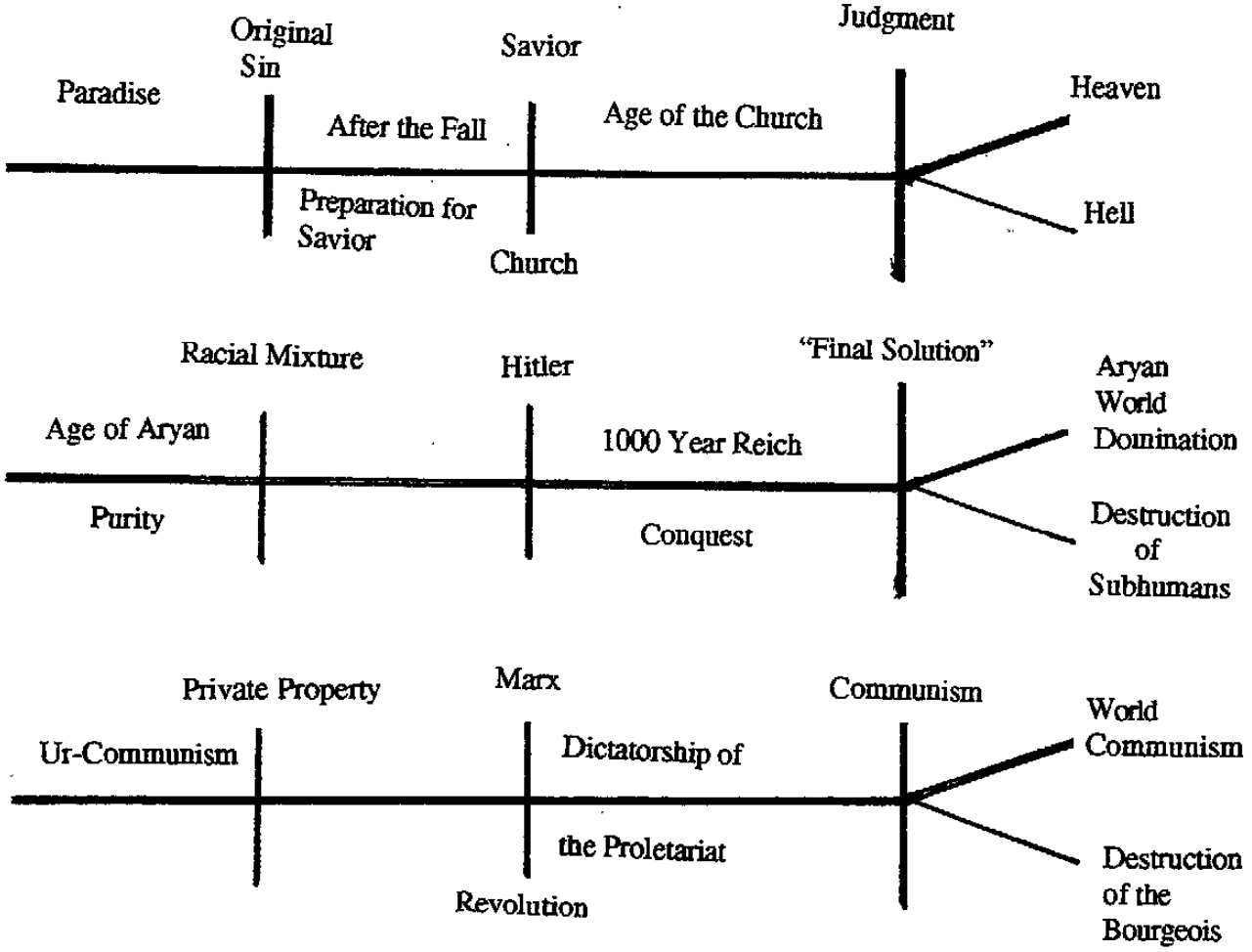
— Nazi Cosmology —

The cosmology underlying Nazi ideology is reminiscent of Manichaen dualism. The important factor is that there is an ongoing *conflict* in the world— a conflict between the forces of darkness and evil (embodied in the subhuman species of mankind) and the forces of light and good (embodied in the embattled Aryan). The Aryan is good, not by virtue of his actions or beliefs but by his very nature and organic essence. By the same token the subhumans are evil by reason of their organic inferiority. The cosmic struggle is an organic one between subhumans whose agenda it is to destroy the human Aryan race before it has a chance to evolve into the superhuman race of the future.

The idea of *conflict* is essential to Nazi cosmology. This is why the apparently pseudo-scientific theories of Hans Hörbiger concerning cosmic fire and ice were so attractive.

Many believed that the Aryan man had a "divine spark" which was more evident in ancient times, but that this spark had become clouded, and under the influence of Judaized Christian culture backward steps were taken in the evolution of the superman. On the most magical level the National Socialist agenda was to aid this further evolution of the *Volk* (the most advanced of the Aryan race, the Germanics). Instead of the economically driven historical dialectic of the Marxists the Nazis had an organically (nationally) determined evolutionary dialectic. The end result would, however, be similar in both cases. There would be on earth a paradise ruled by a perfected species of man. For the Marxist this would be achieved through revolution, "education" and strict planning of the economy— providing for all the material wants of the people. For the Nazi this paradise would be brought about through conquest, hygiene, and eugenics— selective breeding leading to the evolution of the superman. In both the case of Marxism and National Socialism, the cosmological model is probably evolved from the Judeo-Christian model. Table 7:1 comparatively shows the cosmological relationships among these ideologies.

Table 7:1 The Judeo-Christian, National Socialist and Marxist Cosmologies(5)



Nazi Methodology

We can speak of a form of Nazi magic with a definite aim— the divination of the *Volk*. Its methodology is, however, something other than what many books on "occult Nazism" might lead one to believe. Attempts to attach Nazi magical methods with those of mainstream western occultism— Crowley, Gurdjieff, and so on, completely miss the mark. Nazi magic is rooted entirely in an organic model. There is a mysterious element, a hidden or occult component, that goes beyond established genetic sciences. Poetically or mystically this might be referred to as "the blood," but more analytical minds might want to designate it as some particular DNA pattern.

The methods described here must be interpreted as "magical" because they are intended to cause changes in conformity with will and they are making use of theories that exceed, or stand outside of, the established science of their day or ours.

Four main magical methods are used: hygiene, eugenics, war and ritual. Each supports the other, makes the other possible and each is necessary until the final perfection of the superman has been achieved.

Hygiene is the maintenance of health and the prevention of disease. In the magico-racialist sense used here it is the maintenance of purity and the prevention of further mixed breeding between "Aryans" and "non-Aryans." This became the object of laws established

in Germany in 1935, the so-called Nuremberg Laws. This hygienic stage — which is essentially an operation to separate the "good" from "evil" — is somewhat passive. It only "restores health and prevents disease."

Beyond the hygienic stage is the more active eugenic stage. With eugenics the work becomes one of actually improving, or evolving the *Volk* (now *elected* through hygienic measures) into the willed object of the operation. This more complex and delicate phase of the method was only partially undertaken in the Nazi regime. Eugenics attempts to select specimens for reproduction which display elements most similar to the aimed for resultant form.

Himmler indeed envisioned establishments which would correspond to the much invoked horror of "breeding camps." Although his version would have sounded much more "romantic." Programs such as the *Lebensborn* ("Well of Life") were designed to ensure that Aryan women had Aryan children, and that Aryan orphans would have shelter and safe haven from the war. SS men were chosen for their racial characteristics, and German women were encouraged to have children by them (as many as possible) before they were sent off to war (probably to die). In this way the racial stock was not only maintained but improved since the offspring would be those of brave warriors.

War and conflict is important to the whole process for a number of reasons. War is necessary to protect and defend the Aryan racial stock and to help destroy subhuman genetic elements which threaten it now, or may threaten it in the future. War and conflict of all kinds helps to harden the basic Aryan stock and select out of that stock the fittest and most powerful. War can be the final proving ground — in an objective way — for the superiority of the superman. Also war is in and of itself a kind of meta-ritual— which organizes and focuses the attention of a whole culture on an enormous undertaking. This is obviously necessary when one is trying to revolutionize a culture at the root level— this was true for Marxist revolutionary societies as well. If there is no war really going on, one needs to be created in fact or in propagandistic fiction.

The importance of ritual and spectacle, public and private, is obvious to anyone who has seen films of Nazi rallies, parades, and so on. The National Socialists were modern masters of symbolism and ritual— what would be called Lesser (Black) Magic in left-hand path circles today. (Nowadays only rock concerts and sports events remain as pathetic attempts at this kind of spectacle.)

The ritual was necessary to focus attention on the cause and shape and nature of the cause on a day in, day out basis. As individuals can be transformed by rituals, whole cultures can also be metamorphicized though collective participation in such rituals. Even marginally effective ones, if repeated often and long enough, will have some result. But it may take only one good jolt from a highly potent rite to have a profound and lasting effect. The Nazis used both kinds.

The Rituals of Nazism

Although the NSDAP and all its various groupings, such as the SS and the Hitler-Youth, had many kinds of rituals and festivals, we will concentrate here on the more public ones. There is some public record of these, which has been recorded. Of the more secret rites, little to nothing remains for us to record. A lengthy discussion of National Socialist liturgy can be found in Klaus Vondung's *Magie und Manipulation* (1971).

From the calendrical rites we can form a well-rounded picture of the kind of rituals the Nazis were developing. Besides the "Ceremonies of the Reich and the Course of the Year," other liturgical formats used by them were: "Morning Ceremonies" (*Morgenfeiern*) also called "philosophical hours of celebration," "Ceremonies of Life" (rites of passage), and the dramatic celebratory plays and so-called *Thing*-plays. This latter type of ritual was an effort to create a mass drama in which the audience, or congregation, participated in poetic chants with actors or choral groups. Special open-air theaters, called *Thingstätten* ("Thing-Steads") were built for this purpose in the early years of the Reich.

From the beginning we want to avoid the mistake of assuming this liturgy was a standardized one, or that it was ever fully developed during the short history of Nazism. Some features were developed only late (after the war had begun) and others fell away in the early years. some ceremonial forms were practiced only in certain segments of the Party— which, despite the *Führerprinzip*, was far from a monolithic entity. There was a deep æsthetic-ceremonial rift between proponents of a Romantic-Germanic style (favored by Himmler and Rosenberg) within the SS and the Hitler-Youth, and a Neo-Classical style favored by Hitler (and hence the "mainstream" of the Party).

Ceremonies of the Reich and Course of the Year

It was clear from the beginning of the Third Reich that the Party was actively trying to displace orthodox Christianity. One of the most significant ways it set about doing this was through the institution of its own "sacred calendar." The main days celebrated were:

30 January: Day of Coming to Power

The main liturgical act was a night-time torchlight parade as a re-enactment of the one held on that night in 1933. Its significance was the final victory of the Party.

24 February: Proclamation of the Party Program

This was, in the early years, celebrated by Hitler and the "old guard" in the Hofbräuhaus in Munich in private ceremonies. It was in the beer hall that Hitler had first proclaimed the program of the party on this date in 1920. This was only briefly a special day of pnblic celebration (1934-1935). Its significance was the mythic foundations of victory— which would come to fruition on 30 January 1933.

16 March: Heroes' Memorial Day

This holiday was taken over from the Weimar Republic and was originally called "Day of Popular Mourning" (*Volkstrauertag*)— and was a day for mourning the dead of the (First) World War. But it was Nazified into a day of heroic celebration of those who fell in battle.

Last Sunday in March: Pledging of the Youth

This was analogous to confirmation in the Christian churches. It was the day on which the 14 year old boys and girls could transfer to the Hitler-Youth (*Hitler-Jugend*) or League of German Girls (*Bund deutscher Mädel*) from the corresponding "junior leagues" of these organizations. Although this was an individual rite of passage, it had national significance as a time of celebrating the commitment of youth to the movement.

20 April: Hitler's Birthday

Only once was this a legal holiday, but three important liturgical events took place on this day: the acceptance of 10 year olds into the German Youth-Folk, and League of Young Girls, military parades, and the swearing in of Political Leaders of the Party. This latter event was staged in full liturgical splendor at night in the Königsplatz in Munich illuminated with torches and vessels of fire.

1 May: National Day of Celebration of the German Folk

This was an ancient festival, which through Marxist influence had acquired the connotation of a "labor day." The Nazis combined these ideas to celebrate the worker as well as "joy over the victory of eternally new life." Goebbels declared it the highest holiday of the German people.

German Easter and High May

Two days that had taken on Christian importance, Easter and Pentecost (fifty days after Easter)— called "High may" in the folk tradition — were repaganized by the National Socialists. These were celebrated with neo-Germanic festivities and had the function of focusing the attention of the folk on their national heritage as distinct from the internationalist form of Christianity.

Second Sunday in May: Mothers' Day

After the war had begun in 1939, the Nazis instituted ceremonies in which mothers who had borne a certain number of children would be invested with a Cross of Honor, and those mothers who had lost children in the fighting were escorted by flower-bearing Hitler-Youth to ceremonies where they received places of honor.

21 June: Summer Solstice

This was especially celebrated by the Hitler-Youth and the SS, the groups most interested in Germanic traditions. In the SS it was the time when good Aryan marriages were made, and other neo-Germanic festivals were held. After 1937 Goebbels arranged a more Neo-Classical ceremony in Olympia Stadium in which the solstice fire was ignited— to symbolize the victory of the Aryan race. As usual, this ceremony was held at night.

First Half of September: Party Day of the Reich

This was the most important celebration of the full power of the Party— the triumph of its will, as it were. Actually this consisted of an entire week of political and ritual events. In 1934 these were recorded by Leni Riefenstahl in her famous film *Triumph des Willens*.

Beginning of October: Harvest Thanksgiving Day

As 1 May was the workers' day, this was the day to honor the farmer— held in high regard in the "Green" Nazi *Blut und Boden* ideology. The Harvest Festival Rally was held in the 1930s in the town of Bückeberg near Hameln. Hundreds of thousands of farmers were brought to this festival which also had a set liturgy, the high point of which was the presentation of the harvest-crown to the *Führer*. This symbolized the presentation of the harvest to the entire *Volk*.

9 November: Memorial Day for the Fallen of the Movement

This is the anniversary of the failed *Putsch* of 1923. by all accounts this was the most religiously loaded cultic affair of the Party. In the ritual the "Old Guard," those who had been there on that day in 1923, and who had been invested by Hitler with a special medal — the *Blutorden* — gathered with the *Führer* in front of the *Bürgerbräukeller* beer-hall and marched toward the *Feldherrnhalle*, where 16 of their number had been felled by gunshot in 1923. This march was led by member of the *Blutorden* bearing before them the famed "Blood-Flag," the one carried on that day and which had been stained with the blood of the martyrs. As they marched they passed pylons upon which were written the names of 240 "fallen of the movement." As the "Blood-Flag" passed by each pylon the name of the martyr was called out. Throughout this procession the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* (anthem of the Party) blared out through loud-speakers. When they reached the *Feldherrnhalle* 16 canon shots rang out. Hitler laid a wreath on the memorial stone of the martyrs as the *Lied vom guten Kameraden* played, followed by the *Deutschlandlied* ("Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles...) which swelled in intensity as the marchers continued their way to the *Königsplatz*— where the martyrs had been entombed in the "Temple of Honor." Here a speech — usually by Goebbels — was made. the names of the martyrs were read out as the gathered Hitler-Youth answered chorally: "Here!" After every name there were three-gun salutes. The *Horst-Wessel-Lied* was again played, followed by the *Badenweiler* march (Hitler's favorite) and the *Deutschlandlied*.

21 December and the "Holy Nights"— Winter Solstice

Although already largely pagan in form, the German Christmas festivities became the targets of Nazi liturgical reinterpretation. Himmler was especially interested in re-Germanicizing the festival as the Yule-Fest. Goebbels and Rosenberg both used more subtle means. In all cases, however, since this festival always had been (even in pagan times) a private family or clanic and not a public affair, it did not become a candidate for massive Nazi liturgy. It posed a new problem: how to develop National Socialist traditions in private homes. It was 1942 before this began to take on set forms (outside the SS where Himmler's version of the Yule-Fest had long been practiced). The festival was to consist of three major celebrations: 1) of the "troop" (that is, within the NS organizations, military groups, etc.), 2) of the community, and 3) of the family. During the Christmas seasons of 1943 and 1944 the Ministry of Propaganda issued a book called *Deutsche Kriegsweihnachten* (A German War-time Christmas) which gave a full private liturgy with songs, poems, customs and legends. This went so far as to present the legend of the dead soldier who returned for "Holy Nights" to participate invisibly in the celebrations of the family.

There were many kinds of ritual used by the Nazis, but a common form underlying at least a part of most of the, and clearly defining many of them, was a 16 point working outline divided into three parts:

Part I:
Fanfares
1. Marching in of the banners and flags
2. Common song
3. Poetic invocation
4. Choral of the troops (ritualized chants)

Part II:
5. The Eternal Watch (Word of the *Führer*)
6. Choral of the troops
7. Address of the highest ranking official
8. Honoring of the Fallen
9. Oath of Obligation (to dead, *Volk*, etc.)
10. Honoring of the Dead (ancestors, heroes, etc.)
11. Choral of the troops

Part III:
12. Solemn vows
13. Common song
14. Honoring of the *Führer* (threefold *Sieg Heil*!)
15. National hymns. i.e. *Horst-Wessel-Lied* and the *Deutschlandlied*

Fanfares
16. Marching out of the banners and flags

As a form of Lesser Magic these rituals had many functions. Among them were the forging of a focused "mass will" of the *Volk*, the creation of a deep sense of self-consciousness as an organic entity, the bonding of that entity to a set of symbols, the projection of the entity through those symbols back in time to the ancestors and forward in time to the descendants.

The ritual devices were often complex and manifold, but they generally consisted of these elements: ritually shaped space, motion within that space, color, sound (music), and the spoken word. All this was played out in a pattern of dynamic tension between the individual and the gathered mass— nowhere is this more symbolically clear than the sight of the *Führer* addressing the faithful troops at Nuremberg.

The magical methodology of the National Socialists, as we can reconstruct it today, extended from private chambers to mass rallies, from traditional folk-festivals to high-tech electronics, from the rites of war to the rites of spring. As with all magic, however, the *aim* must be kept firmly in focus when attempting to understand it. In this instance the aim was the forging of the Master Race— the *Volk* made divine. The methods involved the attempt to separate the genetic foundation for this massive working from the rest (for this hygiene and war were necessary), and the transformation of that foundation (for which ritual and eugenics were needed). The most massive problem was cultural in nature— how to motivate millions of the most modern, well-educated educated people in the world to cooperate in the most radical social and magical experiment in history? The attempt to manipulate the mass-mind to these ends was the underlying factor in much of that which we can readily identify today as real "Nazi occultism."

The Nazis and the Left-Hand Path

The closest comparison to the National Socialist doctrines with regard to the left-hand path would be those of Marxism. Whereas Marxism proceeds from a materialistic cosmology and looks to social and economic factors in creating its ideology for the perfectibility of the human species, National Socialism proceeds from a mystically organic model and looks to racial and military factors in creating its model for the deification of the elected *Volk*.

In the final analysis we must again ask ourselves whether the Nazis are in any real sense to be aligned with the left-hand path. On the essential element of self-deification, the Nazis present a mixed picture. The *Führerprinzip* — the idea of an absolute ruler of god-like power — is in a sense consistent with left-hand path ideas. But this is institutionalized in a statist form which is an anathema to the general practice of the left-hand path focused on the individual. Hitler may have been able to practice the path of the left-hand, or perhaps Himmler, but few below them. (And it is highly doubtful whether either of these men understood themselves in this capacity.) The deification in Nazism is contained not in the individual, and not in the whole of the human species (as with Communism) but in the particular organic strain of humanity known as the Aryans. It is the *Volk* as an *organic* construct which will reach the state of divinity in the National Socialist model.

The Nazis were to separate this new "god" from all others, and develop it to a new level of being. If there is a crux to the issue of the nature of "evil" with regard to the National Socialists, or to the question of whether they practiced any sort of "black magic," surely this is it. The Nazi represents a race-based nationalistic rebellion against the natural cosmic order (or perhaps modern "conventional order"), just as the true Black Magician represents that rebellion in the individual ego.

This fact negates the viability of the essential individualistic component to the practice of the left-hand path. The individual is almost totally irrelevant in the ideology of Nazism— except as a mythic heroic model for behavior suited to the aims of the State.

The National Socialist penchant for rank and status and for hierarchical command structures is not unique in any way. This should not be confused as a sign of magical initiation. A higher rank in an organization indicates the level of service that person is capable of rendering the organization, but is not intended to indicate the level of *being* or essence attained by that individual as a human being. The most "magical" aspect of National Socialist "rankings" would have to do with the relative "purity" of a person's "blood." The more pure the person's blood, the closer he or she came to being a *part of* the divine ideal. As genetic, or eugenic, magic was the major Nazi methodology for working in the field of magical reality — the genetic structure of the *Volk* — "initiatory progress" in this could hardly be measured in individual terms, but only in familial ones.

Indeed the Nazis did use *magic* of a most sophisticated and modern kind. The Lesser Magical use of symbolism and spectacle to manipulate and direct the masses is only be rivaled by Madison Avenue. On a higher level, when it comes to magic used to transform the Self into the image of the divine, it is also clear that there was much magic in the practices of the Third Reich. These are most pronounced in the chivalric mythology and methods of the SS and in the meta-ritual of racial transformation. The degree to which these methods could be called Black Magic is open to interpretation. In that the aims are usually collectivist and thought to be "ordained by Nature," they would seem to be more "white magical." But seen from the level of the *selected* (separated and independent) folk-group the picture becomes darker. The separated group, with its own idiosyncratic characteristics, imposes its will on the environment around it— contrary to the "natural" flow of convention and historical development.

Antinomianism is also a complex issue when analyzing National Socialism. The Nazis never embraced conventional symbols of evil, and never identified themselves with Satanic imagery. Their antinomianism was of a far more *modern* kind.

Nazi ideology went against the grain of history— it opposed modernism in all its forms. This was not because the Nazis feared *change* or were "conservative" in the usual sense— they were even more radical in their desire to embrace the *future* than their Marxist counterparts. They opposed trends of modernism they felt to be embodied in materialism, positivism, internationalism and Marxism. In this process the Nazis did adopt some features of medieval ideology— such as anti-Semitism. But this was a concession to conventional wisdom rather than a radical departure from social norms of the day.

The great trend of cultural history was toward egalitarianism, materialism, rationalism, and the belief that all problems have essentially socioeconomic and environmental causes. Today we, as a society, stand firmly in the midst of these opinions and sentiments. Many among us worship these values as if they were God Almighty— and it is against this God that the Nazis rebelled.

National Socialism might best be described as a uniquely post-modern, organic school of the left-hand path. They have an organic, collective basis (Folk), but do have a gradual (initiatory) perspective on the transformation of the entity in question from its mundane base into its divine state using magical means— a triumph of the will.

Notes for Chapter 7

(1) Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian, 1985), pp. 217-225.

(2) Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, pp. 33-65 and Edred Thorsson, *Rune Might* (St. paul, MN: Lewellyn, 1989), pp. 9-26.

(3) Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, pp. 7 ff.; Rudolf Rusten, ed., *Was tut not?: Ein Führer durch die gesamte Literatur der Deutschbewegung* (Leipzig: Hedler, 1914). pp. 43-99 and Lother, Helmut. *Neugermanische Religion und Christentum* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1934).

(4) Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (Munich: Isar. 1958), pp. 176-177.

(5) See Hermann Rauschning Rauschning, Hermann. *Voice of Destruction*. [=*Gespräche mit Hitler*] New York: Putnam, 1940, p. 210.

Chapter 8
THE OCCULT REVIVAL

Against the grain of growing rationalism and scientism of the late 19th and early 20th century there was a groundswell below the surface of establishment culture. This occult movement had its roots in ancient traditions as they had been revived in the Renaissance and early modern era. The deep level appeal of Satanic imagery to this movement is perhaps best accounted for in the fact that it was essentially a counter-cultural force. As James Webb has put it, this constituted a "flight from reason."(1)

From a modernistic, evolutionary perspective this "flight from reason" may seem to constitute some kind of flaw or cultural sin. *Progress* is, after all, the *summum bonum* of the modern mind-set. The left-hand path elements of the occult revival are therefore quite fitting. A revival of the occult in an age in which the light of pure science was to shine brightest and show the way to a rational future is a powerful antinomian statement.

One aspect of this scientific revolution had to be accounted for in the occult revival: Evolution. Charles Darwin published his *Origin of the Species* in 1859. The compelling idea that man had *evolved* from lower life forms rather than that God had *created* mankind was revolutionary and was a great challenge to traditional religious cosmologies. The occult revival, however, seemed to embrace the concept of evolution— albeit in its own mystical model.

The occult revival can be dated from the year of the foundation of the Theosophical Society (and the birth of Aleister Crowley)— 1875. It effectively comes to an end, or to the end of its first phase at the end of World War II. This revival was characterized by a myriad of organizations, societies, orders and schools. But the most important from a left-hand path viewpoint were the Theosophical Society, the orders of Aleister Crowley and their derivatives, the magic of Austin Osman Spare and the Work of G. I. Gurdjieff.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and The Theosophical Society

Perhaps no other figure is more responsible for the 20th century occult revival than Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (*née* von Hahn). She was born in the Ukraine in 1831 the daughter of an officer in the Russian army. Her mother and grandmother provided female role models of non-conformity with upper-class values. Helena's mother wrote novels under the pseudonym Zenaida R-Va. These novels concerned the social position of women in revolutionary terms. her grandmother, Helena Pavlovna de Fadeef, was an informed correspondent of famous scientists of her day with a keen interest in geology and botany. She even has a fossil named after her: the Venus Fadeef.

In childhood Helena Petrovna was known for her active imagination. She was able to spin wild yarns and create whole worlds out of her mind even at a young age. In 1847, just before she turned 17, she was married by arrangement to Nikifor Blavatsky who was then 40. Blavatsky was to be the vice-governor of Yerivan in Armenia. But after only a brief time Helena abandoned Nikifor and made her way to Constantinople.

For about the next 25 years there is little concrete evidence for what Blavatsky's life was like. To these years, which must have been formative for her intellectual development, Bruce Campbell has assigned four major characteristics:(2)

1) She is known to have traveled throughout Europe, the Middle East and North America.
2) She was involved with spiritualism and knew Paulus Metamon in Cairo and D. D. Holm in England.
3) She led a generally "Bohemian" existence, took drugs (especially hashish), had affairs with several men and perhaps bore as many as two children out of wedlock.
4) Also she was possessed of a certain feeling of *mission* about her own life.

In 1871 she founded her first organization, the *Societé Spirite* in Cairo. After some further travels she eventually emigrated to the USA in 1873. In New York she worked at various jobs, including the manufacture of artificial flowers. The next year she met Henry Steel Olcott, a journalist and occult enthusiast, at a house in Chittenden, Vermont famous for its "spiritualistic" phenomena. Olcott and Blavatsky became friends, and in 1875 they founded the Theosophical Society with a number of others interested in spiritualism and ancient wisdom teachings. HPB was not the sole leader of the group at first, she was the Corresponding Secretary. Her talents were not administrative, but it was her charisma and writings which attracted and held most Theosophists to the "cause."

Shortly after founding the society HPB went to Prof. Hiram Carson's house in Ithica, New York. She went there to help the professor make spiritual contact with his daughter who had recently died. It was there that she began to write her first major work, *Isis Unveiled*. Together with Olcott she continued writing this two volume opus in New York City. The work was published in 1877. Even then, shortly after its publication, it was noticed that a large amount of it had been plagiarized from about 100 books on the occult commonly available at that time. William E. Coleman found about 2000 plagiarized passages lifted verbatim from these books.(3)

Fraud, trickery and plagiarism were common traits of Blavatsky's method of operation. How much of her efforts in these directions can be ascribed to the motives of the left-hand path Buddhist conjuror and how much to the motives of the confidence (wo)man is left for others to decide.

For the first two or three years the Society stagnated and membership dwindled as it tried to find its own identity outside spiritualism. In 1878 there was a brief official merger between the TS and the Arya Smaj, an Indian organization promoting a return to archaic Vedic, Aryan (Indo-European) values and customs. This was the beginning of a long-time close relationship the TS was to have with Indian society and politics. At the very end of 1878 Blavatsky and Olcott set sail for India, In February of 1879 the headquarters of the TS were moved first to Bombay, later to Adyar. Theosophy became more and more open to increasing amounts of Indian teachings, both Hindu and Buddhist. Over 100 chapters of the Society were opened in India at that time.

It is only after this time (1879) that the Mahatmas ("great-souled-ones"), or Masters, became an integral part of Theosophical teachings, although HPB would later claim that she had been taught by them in Tibet back in that obscure, pre-1873, period in her life. But it seems most reasonable to conclude that the whole story of the Mahatmas was fabricated as a common sorcerer's ploy to gain prestige, power and charisma— much like Anton LaVey and Carlos Casteneda would do in the 1960s and 1970s of our century.

Blavatsky translated her mediumistic talent for communicating with people's dead relatives to one for communicating with "Hidden Masters." here too is the root of the late 20th century craze for "channeling" bazillion year-old extraterrestrials. In 1884 Blavatsky's "phenomena" were investigated by the somewhat skeptical Society for Psychical Research and found to be fraudulent. Also, while HPB was in England her methods were exposed by a former confidant in Adyar.

Blavatsky eventually moved back to England to say in 1887. The last five years of her life were devoted to writing The *Secret Doctrine* (1888) and articles for her own journal *Lucifer* which she founded at that time. She was also engaged in a power struggle with Olcott for control of the Society. As a part of this struggle she founded an "Esoteric Section" as a kind of "inner order" within the Theosophical Society.

In may of 1891 HPB died. But there can be no doubt that her vision and her voice, as heard through her writings have been the guiding principles for the TS through several generations of its existence.

One of the chief contributions of the Theosophical Society to the general occult revival was the profound counections it made between eastern and western occult or religious teachings. Blavatsky would on numerous occasions make statements to the effect that both eastern and western traditions were derived from the great "secret doctrine" the common source of Hindu and Greek wisdom schools.(4) this is, of course, true but the *factual* reason for this, the common Indo-European heritage of both, was still obscured from popular knowledge in Blavatsky's day. This is somewhat ironic since one of the other legacies of the TS to the occult revival was an infusion of at least a "faith" in scientific methods and terminology. The Theosophical Society was to some extent an attempt to bridge the gap between medieval faith and modern science by harking back to "ancient wisdom."

The flow of popularized esoteric information from the east began through the conduit provided by the TS. It was in this body of information that the ideas of left-hand path tantrism and right-hand path mysticism entered into the western world on a wide scale.

Theosophy and the Left-Hand Path

The relationship of Theosophy to the left-hand path is highly ambiguous and in many ways foreshadows the same ambiguities found in the magical career of Aleister Crowley, who was only 16 when HPB died. Blavatsky was often quick to identify her movement with the "White Lodge" or the "Great White Brotherhood," which is occasionally contrasted with the "Black Lodge." Blavatsky is usually anxious to claim to be a part of the *White* Brotherhood, while at the same time her works are replete with positive references to Satan and Lucifer. Even her own magazine published in the final years of her life was called *Lucifer*. Adding to the ambiguity, she asserts that in theory the end of human development or initiation is the loss of the spark of individuality in the larger fire, the drop within the ocean, individuality must be stamped out as the "self of matter," the "bud of personality" is crushed so that the SELF of spirit — beyond individuality — may thrive.(5)

But as we see her system in action we do not — even theoretically — see selfless souls devoid of personality but rather "hidden" and ascended masters— many said to be still living in human bodies — in the company of great individuals in the history of mankind from Pythagoras to Jesus, and from Confucius to Mesmer. The implicit *reality* of the Theosophical myth is, even by its own definitions, left-hand path. The personality and individual consciousness is not obliterated, but rather these individuals ascend to a level of consciousness, individuation and immortality otherwise reserved for gods and goddesses.

We are also reminded of the spiritualistic roots of Theosophy. Spiritualism is a sort of cult of at least quasi-immortal personalities. Yet in Spiritualism these entities are largely impotent in their dealings with the living— but the Masters virtually control the living, or could do so if they wished.

To some extent we must look at Blavatsky's ideology or system in much the same way we would look at the staging of one of her "phenomena." They are both appearances with hidden realities and with a hidden agenda which comes back to an empowerment of the sorcerer who creates the appearances, and perhaps, if he is observant, the enlightenment of the one who looks on.

Any *traditional* right-hand path practitioner, whether Hindu or Christian, Buddhist or Jew, will quickly see in Theosophy a system which glorifies the individual, promotes the biological interests of the Aryans (Indo-Europeans) and posits a rationally willed method of

self-transformation— any one of which would be theoretical reasons to condemn Theosophy as "left-handed" or "sinister." But perhaps because of the innate fear and loathing most humans have of the full implications of the left-hand path— knowledge (for ignorance is bliss), consciousness, power (for with it comes responsibility), and individual immortality (for in it there is no peace) — the structures of the left-hand path are hidden and disguised behind semantic sorceries such as: "And now they Self is lost in SELF. Thyself unto THYSELF, merged in THAT SELF from which thous first didst radiate."(6)

HPB and the "Light-Bearer"

The fact that Blavatsky named her personal magazine *Lucifer* is a positive indication of her attitude toward that idea and figure in the traditions of humanity. *Lucifer* was published at about the time she was writing *The Secret Doctrine* during the last years of her life so the title can not be dismissed as a youthful indiscretion.

Her understanding of Lucifer-Satan (whom she equates on one level)(7) is clearly a variant of the Ophite-Gnostic interpretation. When referring to Hebraic tradition she equates Jehovah Elohim with the demiurge who created the world and man's physical aspect, and she sees the true god who liberated man and gave him his divine aspects as Lucifer-Satan. This divine aspect is one of dynamic spiritual immortality — as opposed to the static physical immortality offered by Jehovah.(8)

HPB made no apologies for her positive valorization of what orthodox Christian theologians called "devils," nor for her negative opinion of those "ignorant and malicious" theologians and their God and his angels. The "devils" she sees as the true, higher, more spiritual aspects of the gods (or God).(9)

The God of orthodox theologians is, for Blavatsky, the source of true evil in the world which is equated with "an antagonizing blind force in nature; it is *reaction*, *opposition*, and *contrast*" but even in this she can see that in reality such things can be "evil for some, good for others."(*SD*, II, 413) From the esoteric doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism she seems to have absorbed the principle that the "good" involves an understanding of duality and the necessity of its preservation, while "evil" is concerned with the destruction of one aspect (either/or) of the duality by the other.

In *The Secret Doctrine* she writes:

> In human nature, evil denotes only the polarity of matter and Spirit, a struggle of life between the two manifested Principles in Space and Time, which principles are one *per sé*, inasmuch they are rooted in the Absolute. In Kosmos, the equilibrium must be preserved. The operations of the two contraries produce harmony, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces which are necessary to each other — mutually inter-dependent — "in order that both should live." If one is arrested, the action of the other will become immediately self-destructive.(*SD* I, 416)

HPB sees in humanity — *or at least a portion of it* — the actual incarnation of the divine spark. In her interpretation of the conflict between Satan and Jehovah she sees that Satan "claimed and enforced his right of independent judgment and will, his right of freeagency and responsibility." This is the true nature of the "fallen angels."(10) A "fallen angel" is then an *agathodaimôn* (Gk. "good-spirit") as opposed to Jehovah and his obedient angels each of which is a *kakodaimôn* (Gk. "evil-spirit"). The "fallen angels" are an older creation possessing free will who rebelled against the *natural order* of Jehovah.(11) One of the revolutionary ideas contained in *The Secret Doctrine* is that the gift of the divine spark is the result of actual *incarnation* of the "fallen angles" in human bodies— through sexual reproduction. Some of these ideas were later picked up and expanded by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (= Adolf Joseph Lanz) in works such as *Theozoologie*.

Whether it is in the Hebrew tradition where she interpreted the myth of Eden recorded in Genesis (II-IV) or the in the Greek myth of Prometheus HPB sees metaphors portraying

the transformation of "fallen angels" into physical bodies— thus inseminating carnal humanity with a spark of the divine. Jehovah, or Zeus, created the flesh — senseless and without a mind — but Lucifer, or Prometheus, "represents the intellect infused into

No man is more enigmatic in the history of the occult revival than Edward Alexander Crowley (1875-1947) — better known as Aleister Crowley. He is so enigmatic because although opinions of him and his work are often strong, they hardly ever agree— and what makes matters even more knotty is the fact that Crowley himself seems not to have been totally sure of his own nature: Was he the "Great Wild Beast" or the "World Teacher"— or both?

Most discussions of Crowley quickly descend into recounting of various legends and anecdotes concerning his exploits. These may be found in numerous books, for example John Symond's *The Great Beast* (1972)— as well as Crowley's own *Confessions*. My intention here is to concentrate on the *ideas* of Crowley as they possibly relate to the left-hand path system of magical philosophy.